

**Eighteenth sitting**

Thursday, 14 June 2007, 11.00 a.m.

*President: Mr. Blondel***REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING
BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL:
DISCUSSION (CONT.)**

The PRESIDENT

We shall now return to the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

The sitting continues with delegates' statements.

The transcript of speeches made in a language other than English, French or Spanish is produced in the language chosen by the country concerned for the purpose of official correspondence with the ILO.

Mr. KHAN (*Government, Pakistan*)

It is an honour for me to address the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference, the parliament of the world of work. The Conference provides an excellent opportunity to reflect upon the challenges raised by the Governments and the social partners in the tripartite setting of the ILO.

The Director-General, in his Report to the International Labour Conference, has outlined the challenges and the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and has presented some options for meeting these challenges and their impact on sustainable development. We find the Director-General's views of great interest and believe that they merit further discussion and careful reflection. I would like to share some general thoughts on the issue.

Promoting decent work requires, as a prerequisite, the existence of sustainable enterprises. For this, managing the effects of globalization, strengthening institutions and governments at all levels is essential. This is not an easy task, especially in the context of the rapid and profound changes being brought about by globalization. Decent work is best promoted through strong and efficient markets and strong effective institutions.

Social inequality within and among nations, aggravated by an uneven distribution of benefits and the cost of globalization, is a serious threat to sustainable development. We have to ensure that human financial and material resources are combined equitably and efficiently to achieve innovation and enhanced productivity. This calls for a new form of cooperation among governments, businesses and societies.

The ILO, with its unique tripartite structure, has a central role to play in all the areas that I have just

mentioned. We would agree with the Director-General that in order for the ILO to play an effective role this Organization must constantly review and strengthen its capacity to assist its membership. However, we believe that in doing so we must especially strengthen the Organization's ability to undertake data gathering and analytical work, provide technical assistance in complex, interdisciplinary areas pertaining to employment generation and promote consensus on optimal approaches to achieve decent work in the specific socio-economic context of particular countries. At the same time, the tendency to overload review and reporting mechanisms should be avoided.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees freedom and non-discrimination in fundamental human rights. No citizen otherwise qualified for employment can be discriminated against on any grounds. Moreover, Pakistan is one of those countries that has ratified all eight core Conventions of the ILO.

In line with these objectives, the Government of Pakistan has made decent employment central to its economic development policies and has stressed the creation of conditions conducive to decent employment generation, poverty reduction and human resource development for sustainable economic and social development.

The initiatives in these areas include the poverty reduction support strategy, which aims to address people below the poverty line in providing employment opportunities, social security and education. This has brought 10 per cent of the people above the poverty line and reduced unemployment from 7.8 per cent to 6.4 per cent.

Specially targeted programmes have been undertaken for women's empowerment to provide equal opportunities for decent employment. Recently, the Government has reserved 10 per cent of posts in all public sector organizations for women.

Similarly, the Ministry of Labour has undertaken labour inspection and the social protection policies, skills development and a labour market management system to increase employment and decent work.

Pakistan is one of the eight countries in which a "One UN" pilot project was initiated in March this year. We in Pakistan are working closely with the ILO and the social partners, as well as with other United Nations organizations to implement the Decent Work Country Programme. We place on record our appreciation of the support and assistance provided by the ILO and its area office in Islamabad.

We are convinced that we will succeed in implementing our Decent Work Agenda, despite the challenges of an ever more globalizing world.

Ms. LLOYD (*Government, Seychelles*)

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to convey to the Director-General the good wishes of the President and Government of Seychelles and the gratitude of our people for your successful leadership of the ILO over the years. Under your guidance, the values and principles of the ILO embedded in tripartism and social dialogue have, more than ever, continued to transform the lives of workers in all corners of the world.

Over these years, your stimulating and inspiring interventions have brought about profound, positive changes in the outlook of Governments to enhance an environment for decent and better treatment of workers.

The Decent Work Agenda has been irrefutable evidence of the Director-General's tenacious and relentless effort to bring social justice and democracy to the workplace and beyond. It is also testimony to the objectives of the ILO of ensuring that those in public and private authority develop and implement policies that can give citizens of our member States a fair chance of a decent job. Indeed, a fair chance to a decent job is one of the most widespread democratic and legitimate pursuits worldwide, and it should underpin and be a central objective of all national and international strategies to reduce poverty.

Seychelles wholeheartedly embraces the concept of decent work, as it integrates well within our principle of keeping people at the centre of all national development. Tripartism has been accepted as the main concept and working tool in this process and the Government is doing its utmost to consolidate its efforts. Only in May 2006, the Employment Act was amended to include the institutionalization of a tripartite body, the National Tripartite Employment and Labour Council, and making it a requirement for the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment to consult this Council on all matters relating to labour and employment. You may recall that in 2005 my predecessor reported to this august assembly the adoption of the social charter for dialogue that had been signed by all the social partners. We have in place, therefore, the legal instruments and other mechanisms for employers and workers to influence relevant national policies and programmes.

We are on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals. We are doing this through the implementation of holistic poverty strategies, universal compulsory education up to the age of 15, and gender equality measures, to mention but a few things, and this is evidenced in the Human Development Index where Seychelles is ranked 47 in the world. We are also proud that child labour is foreign to our shores.

At this 96th Session of the International Labour Conference, Seychelles undertakes to fully support the need for us to address issues pertaining to equality at work, and to discuss approaches to tackle those challenges. Equality at work is critical to the advancement of the Decent Work Agenda. If the four strategic objectives identified therein are effectively implemented, it is unquestionable that the achievement of equality will be assured.

With regard to equality, Seychelles is often considered as having "made it", and seen as a model.

Gender equality is more and more mainstreamed at various levels, be it in our Constitution, in our legislation or in our national policies and programmes.

We have a labour force which comprises close to 50 per cent female participation. However, it is those same individuals who are generally single-headed households. We realize that the triple roles that our women have in our society, as mothers and nurturers, producers in the labour force, and participants in our community life, still require attention. We thus call for the social protection objective be interwoven into all national development policies so as to overcome all barriers which may impede our social and economic growth.

There are many complex challenges affecting our world today, and like most, if not all, member States, Seychelles is also subject to the adverse effects of globalization. From this perspective, we need to address the challenges holistically with urgency, zeal and determination, by adopting integrated and systematic socio-economic strategies. It is for this reason that I joined my colleagues in supporting a budget increase for the implementation of programmes designed to empower our nations in the face of these daunting challenges.

I would at this point like to also reiterate the proposal we made two years ago for the need for developing countries to join forces and push for the development and introduction of a vulnerability index to recognize the disparities, vulnerabilities and specificities of countries, with a view to achieving equity and fairness. Such an index will level out the playing field with more equitable participation in the world economy and distribution of benefits. This need arises principally because of the extent to which the economy of a country is exposed to the vicissitudes of factors out of its control. The stimulus for developing such an index comes mostly from the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as some of us tend to register a relatively high GNP per capita, giving the impression of economic strength, when in reality our economies are fragile and in certain cases extremely vulnerable to external shocks.

Seychelles has committed itself to doubling its GDP by 2017. This would, however, not be done at the expense of the well-being of its workers. We will continue to ensure that we not only apply equality at work at enterprise level, but also extend it to encapsulate the needs of workers and individuals in all its social dimensions, and for this we will, more than ever, need the technical assistance of the ILO to further develop our capacity to integrate national policies within international norms and recommendations.

Let me finish by reaffirming that achieving the objectives of decent work is a major challenge for all member States. However, it is a challenge that we can overcome through international and tripartite solidarity. Let me borrow a well known workers' dictum: "L'union fait la force".

Sr. CALDERA SÁNCHEZ-CAPITÁN (*Ministro de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, España*)

Es para mí un honor intervenir ante la Organización Internacional del Trabajo. La OIT representa la conciencia universal a favor de la dignidad en el trabajo, del trabajo decente, y España quiere contribuir a ello. Seguramente España no es el país más rico del mundo, pero está entre los más solidarios.

Es por ello que España se ha convertido en el quinto contribuyente voluntario de la OIT, muy por encima de nuestras posibilidades económicas y de nuestra riqueza. Lo queremos para los españoles, lo queremos para el resto del mundo. Nosotros sabemos, queridos colegas, que España irá mejor, que los ciudadanos tendrán más derechos y que también en el mundo el resto de los ciudadanos los tienen.

Nosotros apostamos por un modelo de integración social donde nadie se quede atrás, y eso vale para nuestros países, pero también para un mundo globalizado donde la justicia, la equidad, la cooperación y la solidaridad deben ser señas de identidad.

Es por ello que mi país ha duplicado en sólo tres años la cooperación al desarrollo, somos el país de la OCDE que ha hecho más intensos esfuerzos en este sentido, y por ello queremos que estos valores universales que defendemos en España sean también defendidos y aplicados en el mundo. Y agradezco el trabajo de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo en defensa de estos valores.

Mirando hacia el futuro, España está comprometida en un programa de reformas sociales muy intenso, como ayer recordó S.A.R. el Príncipe de Asturias en esta misma sala.

España ha aprobado una ley para la igualdad, una ley muy importante, una ley para la igualdad que pretende garantizar la igualdad efectiva entre hombres y mujeres, una ley que en nuestras empresas establece la obligación de aprobar planes de igualdad para que la mujer, a igual trabajo, perciba igual salario, una ley que favorecerá los ascensos profesionales de las mujeres y una ley que impedirá que el hecho de ser madre suponga un retroceso en la carrera profesional de la mujer, una ley que va a aumentar los derechos de la mujer en relación con su maternidad y que establece también un permiso de paternidad para que los hombres se hagan cargo desde el primer segundo del nacimiento del nuevo hijo, una ley para la igualdad, una ley para la mejora de la protección social. Como lo será la ley de la dependencia, cuántos millones de personas en el mundo, discapacitados, o personas mayores no pueden valerse por sí mismos.

España ha aprobado una ley que también favorecerá el empleo y la protección social de las personas afectadas, dándoles el derecho universal a todos ellos para recibir los servicios que necesitan o para recibir las ayudas económicas precisas para que otra persona les preste atención en su situación de dificultad.

Son dos leyes que están a la vanguardia del mundo, a la vanguardia de los derechos sociales que queremos para el mundo. Nos sentimos profundamente solidarios y orgullosos de haber podido desarrollar estas políticas, igual que nos sentimos un país abierto que ante el desafío universal de la inmigración, incorpora a los seres humanos. Los inmigrantes son seres humanos, con los mismos derechos que el resto de los ciudadanos. Agradezco que la OIT haya felicitado a España por la aplicación del Convenio núm. 155 en la integración de los ciudadanos inmigrantes que llegan a España.

Nosotros creemos que debe regularse el flujo migratorio de forma legal, relacionado con la capacidad de acogida de los países fundamentalmente a través del mercado laboral, pero son ciudadanos con derechos, son ciudadanos con derechos civiles, con derechos sociales y con derechos laborales. Por eso hicimos un proceso de regularización de inmigrantes que estaban trabajando en la ilegalidad. De

ese modo, también legalizábamos a sus empresarios, porque cuando alguien trabaja en la economía sumergida, quien le da empleo también está fuera de las normas de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo. Es por eso que me permito llamar la atención a la conciencia universal en favor de los estándares de protección que establece la Organización Internacional del Trabajo. No podemos consentir que haya trabajadores sin derechos, no está a la altura ética de lo que demandan nuestras sociedades, tenemos que regular legalmente los flujos migratorios y favorecer después la integración de las personas que llegan a nuestros países, y hay que hacerlo con legalidad. Legalidad para todos, ésta es una cuestión de derechos civiles y de derechos humanos. Legalidad en esos flujos porque eso será un elemento positivo para las sociedades de donde salen los inmigrantes y para las sociedades de acogida.

Mr. HÉTHY (*Government, Hungary*)

In recent years, political discussion at the ILO Conference has focused on balanced social and economic development, that is on challenges brought about by the implications of globalization. I am fully convinced that we have done a good job, the ILO and the Office, under the direction of Director-General Somavia, are on the right track.

The ILO has worked out and elevated to international policies its Decent Work Agenda. The 2005 United Nations World Summit and the 2006 High-level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council endorsed the Decent Work Programme as an indispensable element of international development. The agreement concluded with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates that there is a real chance to implement this ambitious programme. A meaningful dialogue has got under way among the key actors of economic and trade development, namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the ILO.

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization was established and worked hard. Its conclusion, namely that "the cause of the problems is not globalization but the lack of appropriate institutions and the lack of harmonized international policies", provides clear guidance for national and international action.

On that basis, I propose that the Conference support the endeavours outlined in the Director-General's Report entitled: *Decent work for sustainable development* and, in particular, the strategic efforts to enhance the coherence of trade, financial and employment policies.

The discussion and conclusions on sustainable enterprises has been especially relevant and important for Hungary. The Hungarian Government presently is determined to implement far-reaching reforms, among others in the areas of public finances and the social protection system, with the aim to make these systems more effective and less costly and ensure the sustainable development of the country's economy. This process is difficult and painful, but necessary and unavoidable. The Government asks for the support, or at least the understanding, of its social partners, trade unions and employers.

As a member of the European Union, Hungary intends to make a contribution to the Lisbon Strategy. We fully endorse its approach: to create more and

better jobs while ensuring lasting and balanced economic development.

In Hungary we especially focus on job creation, primarily through providing a business-friendly environment. Hungary puts a strong emphasis on improving employability, as well as on developing a labour market which harmonizes demand and supply more efficiently. All these endeavours should be supplemented and underpinned by training opportunities for all ages and in all professional cycles, a stronger social safety net, along with a benefit system which provides assistance in overcoming disadvantages rather than perpetuating them. Sustainable economic growth requires improved competitiveness as well as technological development. All these objectives are linked, horizontally, by the criteria of equal opportunities and social cohesion.

Hungary's Government shares the ILO's commitment, as reaffirmed in the Director-General's Report, to tripartism. In the Central and Eastern European region, Hungary has the oldest and probably the most powerful tripartite structure, the National Council for the Reconciliation of Interests, which made an invaluable contribution to peaceful transition in the context of privatization, growing unemployment, two-digit inflation and dropping real wages in the 1990s. Tripartism has an important role to play in the context of present challenges. We also believe in wider social dialogue involving new emerging actors in society and in the economy. To achieve our goals, the experience of the international community and participation in international cooperation are indispensable for us. Cooperation in the case of the ILO also means some special channels for Hungary, such as our participation in the work of the ILO's Governing Body and our hosting of the ILO's Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe which we try to provide the best possible working conditions.

Original Russian: Ms. LEVITSKAYA (Government, Russian Federation)

The Report of the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, has touched on the most important aspects of the global dimension of the issue of decent work, which are connected with the challenges of globalization. We share his apprehensions concerning the fact that the inequality of income distribution between rich and poor countries, the unsatisfactory state of global employment inequalities, the unfair distribution of labour resources and the shortage of decent jobs together represent a serious threat to sustainable development.

We believe that we must support the efforts being made by the International Labour Organization to draw up strategies to improve governance in the world of labour, harmonize policies in the areas of trade, finances and employment and extend the labour market information base in order to determine the scale of the shortage of decent jobs.

In the conditions we now face, joint efforts need to be made by ILO member States to find effective methods of regulating the economy, governing the world of labour and providing adequate responses to the challenges of globalization. The problems of sustainable development set out in the Report affect all States to a certain extent, both rich and poor, and the Russian Federation is no exception.

The economic indicators in the Russian Federation bear witness to the fact that the country is confidently entering a new stage of development. The

annual growth of GDP is 6 to 7 per cent. We are seeing positive growth in the real income of the population: on average, 10 to 12 per cent on an annual basis. As a result of the measures adopted over the last few years, poverty in Russia has nearly halved. The growth of employment over the last three years has brought jobs to 3 million people. Russia has not only completely overcome its long-term fall in production, but has now become one of the ten largest economies of the world.

The basic priorities of social and economic policy in the Russian Federation over the next decade will be connected to achieving a better quality of life for our citizens and creating conditions for the sustainable development of the economy. This is an entirely attainable target, despite the systemic challenges with which Russia, like many countries, is faced.

What are these challenges? First of all, there is the unfavourable demographic trend: the falling population due to a low birth rate and low life expectancy, and the increase in the proportion of elderly people in the population as a whole. Secondly, we have the influence of global competition on not only the consumer market, but also on the labour market. Thirdly, our social infrastructure is lagging behind our economic growth and human needs. And fourthly, and finally, there is a growing need for the creation of an effective mechanism to supply our growing economy with highly qualified workers.

In response to these challenges, we can already report that the Government of the Russian Federation, under the leadership of the President, have undertaken a series of measures unprecedented in the history of our country in order to create broad opportunities in the coming year for citizens to have access to a higher level of education, better health care and more comfortable living conditions.

The main features of our policies are their comprehensive nature. We are in the final stages of preparing a number of important instruments, including: demographic policy up until 2025; a labour market action plan and migration policy. The Strategy of the Russian Federation has the following goals: to improve the life expectancy of the population through reducing mortality and raising the birth rate; improving the quality of life and health care; exercising a migration policy that meets the needs of sustainable development for the country; and providing highly qualified workers for this new economy by improving the quality of our human resources.

All these decisions provide a basis for the transition of the Russian economy to a new stage of innovative development. The long-term targets have been adopted by the Government and endorsed by the social partners and will be made a reality on the basis of close tripartite cooperation.

Mr. BORG (Government, Malta)

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Minister of Malta, Minister Galea, who is not present here today.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to congratulate the ILO on its ongoing commitment to promote the Decent Work Agenda, on which the issue of equality occupies a prominent place. We firmly believe discrimination to be both inequitable and inefficient, constraining productivity but also undermining social cohesion. We welcome the clear achievements outlined in the Global Report in re-

spect of a universal strengthening of political commitment to eliminate discrimination, and of the laws and institutions to do so.

However, we also recognize the need to make laws work, to increase access to legal assistance and to increase the capacity of the judicial system to bring about equality.

We support the strengthening of the role of labour inspectorates to take on a preventive and advisory role in respect of equality, alongside the strengthening of their enforcement capacity.

As always, the role of legislation is necessary but not sufficient, and the equality agenda is also significantly furthered by active labour market measures to increase the employability and job placement of disadvantaged groups.

The potential for public procurement processes to promote equality, whether through qualifying conditions or post-contract compliance with labour laws, is very promising. Furthermore, there remains considerable work to be done on measuring and monitoring the various forms of discrimination. As the Global Report exhorts, we must not be afraid to try to quantify discrimination, for what is measured stands the best chance of being managed.

As so aptly put, equality is a “moving target”, and we must be constantly vigilant to better understand and address not only traditional forms of inequality, particularly gender, race and ethnicity and disability, but also emerging ones such as age, religion and sexual orientation, to mention but a few.

Perhaps one of the most pressing challenges to equality in southern European labour markets today is that of mass immigration in recent years. It must be noted that this occurred alongside the general rise in unemployment in the region, though signs of recovery have been evident in recent months.

Unlike in northern Europe, where immigration has traditionally been used in times of boom, in southern Europe we see immigrant labour being used to correct structural defects in the labour market, such as insufficient labour supplies, inflexible labour markets and uncompetitive low-productivity sectors.

While there is not enough high quality and empirical research on the issue, particularly due to the fact that a high proportion of immigrants may well be working or residing in a clandestine manner, the little research that exists indicates that immigrant workers experience very different pay rates and much poorer working conditions than native workers. Although legislation in most countries does not allow for such distinctions to be made between local and immigrant labour, enforcement in this respect remains weak and must be a priority for action.

The directive proposed by the EU on increased sanctions for those employing illegally staying third country nationals, while at the same time strengthening the latter’s right to redress, can only be welcome.

This brings me to my second point, which is the apparently high prevalence of informal work in Europe. Workers in undeclared employment are outside the scope of labour laws and their enforcement, and, in this respect, the traditional tolerance of informality in southern Europe should be rethought. This will also require a closer examination of the role of regulation and informality in southern Europe, with continued effort to seek an optimal balance between flexibility and security which the European Commission so rightly says can only be

worked out in its detail by each particular country itself.

Lastly, but equally significant, is the issue of gender equality in southern Europe. Since the 1970s, the public participation of women has seen marked change. Primarily, women have benefited from the overall shift from agriculture and low-skill manufacturing in southern Europe towards an increasingly stronger knowledge economy.

Women are now participating fully in higher education and training and making great headway into even traditionally male domains.

I am pleased to say, for instance, that while segregation at tertiary level education has been constantly on the decrease, last year was the first time in Malta that the number of tertiary students in science was higher among women than among men.

Women’s labour market participation in Europe has also seen an increase, though a very modest one. The fact that women are delaying the formation of a family and that fertility rates in southern Europe have dropped markedly is a cause for concern, however, it suggests that women still perceive it to be very difficult to combine the requirements of work and family.

There remains much to be done to bring about family-friendly work organization and the provision of affordable child care. It is critical that efforts are stepped up if the much needed rise in the labour supply is to come about in southern Europe, while by no means devaluing the free choice of a number of women to be full-time homemakers and carers of children or elderly relatives.

The potential for collective bargaining and the role of the social partners in bringing about family-friendly work organizations cannot be overlooked. Likewise, public entities, such as labour inspectorates and public employment services, may also play an important role in providing guidelines and advice on making gender equality a workplace reality.

To conclude, I would like once again to congratulate the ILO on its action plan and Decent Work Programme and on its ongoing commitment to raise labour standards across the world.

Mr. MAMMADOV (*Employer, Azerbaijan*)

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you on behalf of the Azerbaijan Employers' delegation and my own behalf, to thank all persons participating in the organization of this great event and wish success to the work of the Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for his Report to the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference, which addresses the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The eight important issues highlighted in the Report are of great interest and significance to Azerbaijan’s employers.

Azerbaijan ratified ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and its Recommendation, which include provisions on discrimination, employment and occupation.

At the same time, the Constitution and Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan prohibit any discrimination in labour relations. That notwithstanding, there are still problems in this regard. Indeed that main problem is the heritage of the former Soviet system, and we need time and experience to move away from Soviet mentality. Moreover, the

Armenian aggression and occupation of 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory also caused great problems, including the loss of 300,000 jobs, and resulted in one million people becoming refugees.

National legislation and international Conventions are very important tools for solving existing problems. Dialogue between social partners and their joint efforts are crucial.

The Decent Work Country Programme for Azerbaijan, signed in Geneva last year, is a good example of this dialogue and will play an important part in solving a series of problems.

The matter comprehensively highlighted in the Director-General's Report, on support for small and medium-sized enterprises to solve problems they face, is also of great interest and importance for us. More than 80 per cent of the Confederation's members are small and medium-sized enterprises. Since 2005 the National Confederation of Employers' Organizations of Azerbaijan has been successfully implementing a project on capacity building for employers' organizations on productivity and competitiveness in Azerbaijan within the ILO ACT/EMP Programme.

Studies conducted in the context of the project were successful in revealing great problems in small and medium-sized enterprises functioning in the Republic, related to the application of international labour standards. In this case, the Director-General is right to say that these entrepreneurial subjects need the support of employers' organizations.

Moreover, the Decent Work Country Programme includes women's employment issues. Today the involvement of women in business activity is of great importance. In this respect, the project on women entrepreneurship development implemented by the National Confederation of Employers' Organizations of Azerbaijan during last year, with ILO support, played a great role in increasing the number of women entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan. We aim to continue to work on the involvement of women, especially young women, in entrepreneurial activity, and increase their business knowledge and skills, and of course here we rely on ILO support.

As a whole, youth employment is a very important issue. Thus, the Confederation intends to continue its "Know about business" and "Start and improve your business" programmes as part of the implementation of the National Employment Strategy, including the development and approval of the National Action Plan on Youth Employment. These programmes enable young people to obtain business knowledge and skills, and to be trained for entrepreneurial activity.

Another important problem reflected in the Decent Work Country Programme is the elimination of child labour which remains a key element of the Confederation's activity. We now are successfully implementing the ILO ACT/EMP project on strengthening the role of employers in the elimination of child labour in agriculture. The Confederation has started to implement one more project with ILO support, on the social impact of HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The project's target sectors include transport, hotels and tourism.

In his Report, the Director-General touched upon wage squeeze problems, which in our country in most cases occur in the informal economy. Now is just the time to highlight this issue. The National Confederation of Employers' Organizations of Azerbaijan has developed a proposal to move from

an informal economy to a formal economy. I believe we'll greatly support the State and society as a whole through implementation of this project.

A State programme for 2007–10 was approved by Presidential decree on 15 May 2007 for the implementation of The State Employment Strategy.

In Conclusion, I would like to stress the Confederation's wish to strengthen cooperation with the ILO to support the implementation of the above-mentioned programmes, and, thus, support successful implementation of policies for the social and economic development of the country. Within this cooperation, I kindly ask the ILO, IOE and other international organizations, and employers' organizations of developed countries to support the National Confederation of Employers' Organizations of Azerbaijan in implementing its useful project proposals on increasing the business knowledge and skills of young women; occupational health and safety, informal to formal economy transition, employability of disabled persons, and the application of international labour standards at workplaces where it would be useful for national employers' organizations to benefit from the experience of transnational companies in order to make us of international social experience in Azerbaijan.

Once more, I express my deep gratitude and respect to the participants of 96th Session of the International Labour Conference and wish the Conference every success.

Sra. MONCADA GODOY (*Secretaria de Estado en los Despachos de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Honduras*)

Señor Presidente, señoras y señores. La República de Honduras, como parte de la región Centroamericana, se hace presente en esta 96.^a reunión de la Conferencia Internacional del Trabajo, con dos propósitos.

El primero, expresar al Consejo de Administración y al señor Director nuestra aceptación de los retos, oportunidades y responsabilidades para promover de manera eficaz el Programa de Trabajo Decente.

El segundo, compartir en buena parte algunas reflexiones contenidas también en la Memoria, tales como que el sistema internacional, con inclusión de la OIT, aún no ha desarrollado sinergias fuertes entre la sostenibilidad social, medioambiental y económica; que no hay estrategias que integren las tres dimensiones mencionadas y, por lo tanto, no se experimentan avances reales en cuanto al desarrollo sostenible; y que falta desarrollar formas de cooperación entre el Gobierno, la empresa y la sociedad que aseguren la mejor calidad de vida.

Estas reflexiones son un verdadero marco dentro del cual aún no estoy segura si tienen cabida los rostros de tristeza, de angustia y de dolor, pero a la vez de fe y de esperanza, de millones de hombres, mujeres, niños y niñas que este mismo día no tienen qué comer y que no entienden de OIT ni de la existencia de 7.500 instrumentos de ratificación, ni de globalización, ni de mercados, ni de desarrollo sostenible, ni de mundialización, ni de trabajo decente.

Es un compromiso moral y ético de nuestros Gobiernos, del sector empleador y trabajador, y de la sociedad en general, reconocer el nivel de responsabilidad que a cada uno corresponde, frente a la situación de pobreza que abate nuestros pueblos, y, partiendo de ello, trabajar fuerte, trabajar de verdad, sin doble cara y sin doble discurso, en la construc-

ción de un Estado de bienestar eficaz y de un tripartismo dinámico, como se expresa en el Informe.

Señoras y señores, trabajemos en consenso. OIT, ayúdenos a que el instrumento del diálogo social nos permita construir ese consenso, pero a favor de los más necesitados. No hay nada por inventar. Su Memoria, señor Director, es lúcida, pero, ¿cómo hacer para materializarla en acciones en beneficio de las mayorías sin oportunidad?

¿Cómo desarrollar esas nuevas estrategias políticas y técnicas, que permitan a la OIT incidir con efectividad y con urgencia, para que dentro de 10 ó 20 años no tengamos que reconocer nuevamente que estamos atrasados en el cumplimiento de los programas establecidos?

¿Cómo emplear a la población que no posee una educación básica?

¿Cómo emplear a la cantidad de emigrantes que a diario son deportados?

¿Qué estrategias adoptar para que sean apoyadas por las organizaciones sindicales y el sector privado, a fin de impulsar programas masivos de formación profesional?

Y, finalmente, ¿cómo continuar manteniendo la fe y la esperanza de millones de gentes que, aunque no están conformes con la democracia, porque no ha resuelto su problema de empleo, continúan creyendo en ella?

Sin duda, el reto para todos es enorme, y desborda las capacidades de los ministerios de trabajo, cuyos ministros debemos cumplir un nuevo rol, como embajadores plenipotenciarios e itinerantes en el mundo del trabajo decente para un desarrollo sostenible.

Nuestro Gobierno impulsa cambios importantes que, sin duda, no son suficientes para revertir las cifras de la pobreza, pero sí para demostrar que, si hay compromiso, es posible su disminución.

Empleadores y trabajadores, siguiendo la recomendación del Grupo de Alto Nivel, con voluntad y compromiso les invito a unirnos todos en la acción.

Ms. ROUNDS GANILAU (*Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations, Tourism and Environment, Fiji*)

I am very honoured to be here and I extend to the President the congratulations of the Fiji delegation on his efficiency in presiding over this august Conference.

The Government and people of Fiji also extend congratulations to the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, for his visionary leadership and to his staff, both here and in Fiji, for challenging us to implement our Decent Work Agenda, towards fair globalization.

The challenge of realizing fair globalization is particularly demanding for all small island States in the Pacific, including Fiji. Our small and vulnerable economies with evolving social and political systems continue to grapple with modern realities and, coupled with the adverse effects of climate change, Pacific island States are increasingly facing immense pressure from globalization at the enterprise, industry, national, regional and international levels.

These complex challenges demand concerted efforts with a common decent work vision by social partners at all different levels of engagement, from the shop floor right through to the international level, so that the political will of our Government at the national level will make decent work a reality. Because of our limited resources and the skewed

landscapes of regional and international trade, it is obvious that we urgently need effective and fair interventionist policies and partnership programmes and projects to give impetus to our national decent work efforts not only within Fiji, but also within the member countries of the Pacific.

Despite these daunting challenges stacked against us, the interim Government of Fiji has made significant progress towards our decent work journey and is fully committed to honouring all its international obligations to the ILO. This is reflected in the recent approval of Fiji's new Employment Relations Law by the interim Government earlier this year, to be effective from 1 October 2007. This enabling labour law finally brings Fiji's employment policy and legislation into compliance with the eight core ILO Conventions and 18 other Conventions, which means that Fiji is now complying with the provisions of the 26 ILO Conventions it has ratified.

This new enabling legislation, which is the basis of Fiji's labour reform, was the result of very extensive and intensive social dialogue among the tripartite social partners, including NGOs, various agencies and the general public, with the guidance of the ILO over the last 10 years. We intend also to establish a national tripartite forum to improve the effectiveness of our social dialogue.

We see for the first time fully paid maternity leave and the introduction of the concept of equal employment opportunities. The new law recognizes sexual harassment as a special form of gender discrimination and the tripartite partners have successfully developed and endorsed a national policy on the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace and Fiji's first national workplace code of practice on HIV/AIDS.

We see the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), as the primary focus on the relationship between employers and workers in the enterprise. When the fundamental rights of equal remuneration and non-discrimination are observed, other equitable issues automatically fall into place. This is also reflected in the Declaration of Philadelphia. In Fiji, implementation of the policies of equality and non-discrimination is also guaranteed by our national Constitution, which contains a general equality provision pursuant to which all citizens shall be treated equally, including the mentally and physically challenged of our community. We are conscious of the effect of globalization, especially the linking of the economic and social activities of nations through the advancement of technology.

The delegation of Fiji welcomes the discussion on work in the fishing sector and the decision of the Governing Body to revise the seven existing ILO standards concerning fishing. Although small in size, Fiji is a maritime nation and our people are engaged in the fishing sector both locally and overseas, so it is important that standards are developed to protect our workers against the dangers of the new work arrangements, particularly the safeguards needed when workers are engaged in the territorial waters of foreign countries vis-à-vis the right of repatriation when contracts are completed, or in the case of emergency. What happens to our people is a major concern, and we look forward to the adoption of a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation to address the plight of all workers in the fishing industry.

We are particularly interested in the promotion of sustainable enterprises, in observing what form labour management relations will take and in how the development of new technologies will affect the formal and informal sectors. We would like to know how to develop appropriate and facilitating legal frameworks and public policies to stimulate and support the sustainable growth of enterprises, especially those run by women entrepreneurs, and their transition from the informal to the formal economy. Our new national service scheme will facilitate this. We now have new public policies entrenched under the Employment Relations Law that will dissuade private enterprises from using the informal economy as a dumping ground for exploitation, especially for women home workers, the service sector and child labour.

My Ministry also administers and enforces the occupational health and safety legislation which has offered protection to workers in the informal economy since 1996, when our reformed occupational health and safety laws and practice came into effect, and we are currently overhauling our workers' compensation system.

The Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations does not cite my country for failing to comply with its reporting obligations. We have now come a long way towards full compliance, and the ILO will agree that we have greatly reduced our reporting deficit. In this regard, I commend our workers' and employers' organizations for their commitment and engagement.

We are now going through a very important phase in our history, a transition period with the leadership of the interim Government, with our economy trying to come to terms with global changes, threats made by our neighbouring countries and the offer of foreign aid with difficult conditions attached. But we continue to move forward in hope.

In conclusion, I extend to you all the best wishes of the delegations of Fiji and the Pacific Islands, and which you a safe journey home.

Original Arabic: Mr. MAATOUG (Secretary of the General People's Committee for Workforce, Training and Employment, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Director-General for the excellent work he has done to improve the performance of this Organization in all fields.

This session of the Conference is extremely important because it touches upon issues which affect people's daily lives and plays a part in meeting the objectives and the requirements of development. There is a wide gap between the rich and the poor, and the gap between the developed and the developing world is growing, threatening prosperity, security, peace and stability.

The global environment is deteriorating, and the challenges are further exacerbated by globalization, the interdependence of markets, movement of capital and increasing global investment flows, which bring new challenges and new opportunities to labour markets. All of these aspects call for more dialogue and cooperation among civilizations and peoples of the world, irrespective of race, religion, language, culture or tradition.

The Jamahiriya is concerned to achieve development in Africa. It calls on the ILO to play a greater role in advancing the development process in Africa

so as to bring about a substantial increase in decent work opportunities for African women and men.

In this regard, the decent work programme implemented by the Organization in Africa for the period 2007-2015 sets a number of ambitious objectives for the tripartite constituents of the Organization and the Regional Office for Africa with a view to developing decent work programmes and promoting cooperation with the partner agencies to speed up progress and meet the international development objectives which have been agreed upon, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The efforts of the Jamahiriya in the area of decent work and poverty reduction are not limited to providing jobs to its citizens, women and men, and young people in particular, by encouraging them to set up small and medium-sized collective enterprises, by stimulating private initiatives through loans on easy terms and streamlining the formalities required for setting up businesses and construction. It also allows its citizens to recruit and train African workers through legislation which makes it easier for them to enter and reside in the country to work in a regulated and defined environment. This is why we have set up a committee to develop a national programme to address the problems of jobseekers through a methodological approach to determine the scope and causes of the problem, as well as strategic proposals and practical policies, programmes and methods of implementation necessary to ensure decent work.

The Jamahiriya has ratified all of the international charters and Conventions in the field of human rights. It was one of the first countries to commit itself to the fundamental principles and rights at work. The legislation in force in the Jamahiriya grants all its citizens and residents the right to freedom to work, in accordance with international labour standards. I would like to clarify the situation and concept of immigrant labour in the Jamahiriya. Contracts are concluded with workers abroad according to employers' needs to make up for the lack of Libyan labour. In other words, immigrant workers are employed under fixed-term contracts in accordance with the Labour Code, No. 58 of 1970.

Arab labour conventions adopted by the Arab Labour Organization regulate freedom of labour and movement of Arab workers between countries. Decisions have been taken by the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the African Union on the movement of labour within African Union member States. Other countries have concluded bilateral agreements with the Jamahiriya on the employment of labour. We would like to point out that the Jamahiriya bears the burden of protecting general security and the security of our borders and dealing with organized crime and drug trafficking resulting from illegal migrant labour, which in some cases uses the Jamahiriya as a transit point to enter Europe. Despite cooperation with certain States to regulate labour flows and reduce the impact of illegal immigration, more than six months have elapsed without any tangible results. That is why we would like to announce that the Jamahiriya is going to begin strictly regulating immigrant labour to ensure that the numbers and kinds of workers match labour market requirements and that recruitment is based on fixed-term contracts drawn up in accordance with the Libyan Labour Code, which is in conformity with all the international labour charters and Conventions adopted by this Organization and the

relevant regulation. This will take effect as of 1 July this year.

All the countries involved in the struggle against clandestine immigration should unite in their efforts to set up development projects in countries of origin so as to provide jobs and regular incomes to the citizens of those countries, which would limit the negative impact of clandestine immigration for countries of origin, destination countries and transit countries.

I would like to broach the issue of the human tragedy affecting hundreds of Libyan children who were injected with the HIV/AIDS virus and known as the case of the Bulgarian nurses. We have unfortunately noted information campaigns and political pressure in favour of one of the parties to the detriment of the party that suffered the damage.

It is regrettable that certain States are pursuing a campaign on behalf of the accused while they ignore the human tragedy of innocent children and their families. One or more of these children dies every day, for the crime was perpetrated against over 400 children. This is an ignominious crime affecting innocent children, and is more serious than any other comparable crime as its effects are felt daily, since the disease does not kill immediately, but slowly, increasing the suffering of the victims and their families. Instead of going to school these children are in hospital.

The Jamahiriya affirms the need to step up efforts to promote cooperation in favour of Palestinian workers. It is deeply saddened and appalled by what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories and the practices of the occupying forces, such as killings and blatant violations of human rights.

Plans for a settlement based on imposing the status quo will not solve the problem of Palestine and will not secure peace in the region. The only solution is to guarantee the return of all Palestinian refugees to their lands and the establishment of a democratic State on the historic lands of Palestine, in which Arabs and Jews live on an equal footing, as it says in the White Book.

Mr. TARTAGLIA (*Worker, Italy*)

The Global Report, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, shows that, despite certain steps forward, inequality and discrimination in the workplace remain widespread. Women still have to manage two occupations (an often precarious job and work in the home) and almost always remain far from the wage levels achieved by their male colleagues, even in jobs of equal value. Other forms of inequality add to the "historical" discrimination; one of these is precariousness of employment contracts. Informal jobs are still the main reason for working poverty, all too often below the sustainability threshold in developing countries, and are increasingly widespread among the younger generation in industrialized countries. The first victims of the new and increasing discrimination are migrant workers, especially women, who are often pushed into an illegal status by repressive – if not xenophobic – laws, and remain far from achieving equal treatment even in those few cases in which the laws do not discriminate.

While the fair globalization proposed in the 2004 report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has enjoyed a wide consensus and has received many institutional acknowledgments, it is hardly practised in reality, as

shown by the global growth of inequality both within and between countries.

As yet, there has been no deep change in the actions of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and neither has there been an increase of democracy and transparency in their decision-making processes, as would be required to implement this social dimension, to give priority to the Decent Work Agenda and to make a real contribution to fighting poverty. On the contrary, in developing countries, these institutions almost always develop economic policies that sacrifice any investment in social services, health care, education, housing and workers' rights to the freedom of the markets, especially financial markets.

The European Union itself, which should indeed act as a positive example of development focused on rights and welfare, is failing to give sufficient impetus to the best part of its social and labour policies and, through its economic partnership agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, is actually denying the labour rights defined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which are a key element for partner country development quality.

Therefore, the role of the ILO should be strengthened within a reformed United Nations structure. The tripartite structure of the ILO and its regulatory character remain essential in ensuring that all core labour standards and the decent work concept will become a priority in all the decisions and policies adopted by international organizations. Strengthening technical cooperation and increasing the role of training and of the Turin Centre will support a tripartite agency that must continue to define, implement and monitor universal labour rules.

This monitoring process is a duty for the ILO in countries where the violations of workers' rights are most serious. Therefore, we express our deep concern for the position of the Employers' group, which has refused to discuss the Colombian case. We express the warmest solidarity to the Colombian trade union movement, which is still facing repression, threats and killings.

Establishing consistency between international institutions and individual government policies is the first step towards a greater efficacy of the tools that the ILO can and should make available for the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda worldwide. Richer countries should be accountable for the enforcement of the guidelines defined at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the Kyoto Protocol and for allocating 0.7 per cent of GDP to cooperation with poorer countries. At the halfway point, we cannot accept being so far from achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while the most powerful States are multiplying their military expenditure and addressing the serious problems of mankind by resorting to war, which we hoped was – and still want to be – ultimately banned for all people.

There should be more pressure on the governments of leading countries (China for one, but also the United States, Brazil and India) that have not yet adopted the Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining. The ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and the Guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for Multinational Enterprises

should become standard tools of economic intervention with sustainable enterprises in any country, as economic and production activities should always be based on respecting labour rights, and indeed all human rights.

Entrepreneurs, apparently committed to corporate social responsibility, should also be more consistent. The spread of unilateral ethical codes seems rather to follow a marketing rationale than a true acceptance of social and environmental rights. It must clearly be said that there is no social responsibility if an enterprise refuses to negotiate with free and representative union organizations. Social responsibility, based on the principles to be set forth by the ILO, is an addition to, and not a substitute for, the existing provisions of law.

Mr. PAPIEV (*Government, Ukraine*)

Please allow me on behalf of the delegation of Ukraine to greet you at the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference and to wish you every success in completing your work.

As far as Ukraine is concerned, the cooperation of the International Labour Organization, and indeed the whole of the United Nations system, is of particular importance at the present time.

This is not just connected with the fact the Ukrainian State at the present time is in a state of transformation, going through problematic processes of political development, but also that Ukraine is experiencing all the contradictory tendencies of globalization.

The Government of Ukraine shares and supports the practical activities of the International Labour Organization, bringing about sustainable economic and social development on the basis of extending the potential of decent work on the basis of the improvement of quality of life and strengthening the principles and mechanism of social dialogue. Globalization must bring greater opportunities for providing for social justice and equality.

Decent work must be not just a universal concept but also the reality of life and a target which is so realistic to achieve. We fully agree with what has been stated in the Report of the Director-General concerning the need for a carefully balanced approach to sustainable development and to take account of social, economic and environmental components in close cooperation with the social partners, and with the support of the ILO, the Government of Ukraine has defined decent work as the most important priority of State social policy and has fully subscribed to the Decent Work Agenda.

We believe that it is a very complicated task, but we would also like to emphasize the fact that the Government, President and authorities have no alternative. The priority since the beginning of the Government's activities has been to provide for growth in employment and a reduction in unemployment, growth of income and in particular improvement of wages and social benefits.

Positive trends on the labour market, which we have seen over the last few years, have been further strengthened in 2006 and subsequent years. The results of the monitoring carried out by Ukraine with the active participation of the ILO have shown that we are seeing a considerable improvement in employment, in particular with regard to young people and the disabled. Unemployment has gone down by 6.8 per cent of the economically active population, aged 15–70. It is also positive that there

are far fewer people who have completely lost the hope of finding a job. We have seen a continual growth in wages and particularly in the minimum wage and average wages, and also in the public sector. This has made it possible to considerably increase social security benefits, in particular pensions.

An important aspect of improving the social protection of our citizens is the social security system and services which are being improved on an annual basis. I can give you a few examples of this. The Government, with the active participation of the social partners, has prepared a draft law on flat-rate contributions to the obligatory national insurance system. The introduction of a flat-rate contribution has made it possible to improve the resources flowing into the funds, target allocations of benefits, and increase these benefits.

We have also introduced State benefits with regard to medical insurance and accumulative pension funds. This all comes under the general State development measures in Ukraine for particular categories of the population, particularly those who are physically and mentally disabled and those with learning difficulties. This category of the population will be under the obligatory State social security system from 2011, after a period of transition.

I would also like to say that in Ukraine, with the support of the ILO in carrying out a national social and economic policy, we are expanding cooperation with the social partners on the basis of the principles of social dialogue. We have a draft law on social dialogue which is extremely important; it is going through the Upper National Council in Ukraine in its first reading. The draft law aims to further promote relations between the State, the employers and the trade unions, that is the promotion of social dialogue.

Owing to the positive results which have been achieved in a relatively short time by the present Government, we certainly feel that it is extremely important to focus not only on the joint efforts to be made by the social partners, but also on resources and international technical assistance which could be given by many organizations, including the ILO.

We have to deal with problems of poverty and manifestations of discrimination in the labour sphere, and the informal sector, particularly in the agriculture sector, and improve the skills of our workforce. Ukraine also needs to improve its pension system, and we have not yet managed to draw up bilateral agreements with other countries concerning our migrants, their social benefits and their employment.

We would like to express our gratitude to the ILO for its support and cooperation, particularly with regard to all the aspects highlighted in the Report of the Director-General.

Mr. POTTER (*Employer, United States*)

Sustainable development, the need to balance economic, social and environmental priorities, cannot occur unless there are sustainable businesses. Enterprises are the primary source of jobs, and small and medium-sized businesses have the greatest needs.

An economic and labour environment is required that facilitates increasing the rate of economic and productivity growth. Enterprise development is a fundamental means of combating poverty, worker dislocation, and raising the standard of living of

workers. This requires an economic environment which provides clear incentives to enterprises for investment and job creation. At the same time, it requires social policies and institutions which facilitate labour market mobility and flexibility, and promotion systems of worker involvement to raise productivity growth.

Labour market flexibility will be improved in all countries by improving training systems and the employability of workers, encouraging small and medium-sized business development through access to capital markets and improved entrepreneurial and management skills, removing discriminatory barriers to the workplace, reforming the labour market, promoting worker involvement in decisions at the enterprise in workplace levels that enhance job creation, flexibility and security; encouraging research and development and developing tripartite dialogue for employment generation at the national level. The surest sign that national frameworks are failing is the presence of large informal economies. One area that is not mentioned among the major themes of the Director-General's Report is the urgent need to assist member States to better implement and enforce their national labour laws and regulations.

Moreover, a number of other economic, political and legal factors must be present. They include a stable economic, political, legal and social environment, low inflation, low interest rates, coherent macroeconomic policies, stable exchange rates, guarantees of human rights, secure property rights, enforceable contracts, open markets, stable commodity prices, low taxes, currency liberalization and debt reduction.

Labour standards in most countries improve progressively with the rising standard of living which results from development. With respect to ILO standards, it is clear that the considerations that relate to domestic employment policies are equally applicable to ILO standards which, after they are ratified, clearly have an impact at the domestic level.

Like all organizations, the ILO must prioritize its activities and focus its activities on the areas where it has the institutional capabilities and competence needed to provide real solutions. The business community has clearly learned that you need to stick to your knitting.

With regard to the issue of wage and income inequality, this is an issue where we must get the diagnosis right. The Report suggests that increasing inequality is caused by global trade. In my own country, income inequality in the United States can be attributed to premiums on higher education, dual-earner households, changes in household structures, longer hours of work among higher-income workers and pay structures that are tied to individual performance. The lowest 20 per cent of incomes in the United States reflects substantial numbers of single person-headed households, failure to achieve a high-school education and lack of participation in the labour market.

Finally, on the issue of modernizing governance structures, under which we include labour statistics and social security systems, we believe that the most pressing work needs to be undertaken at the local and national levels. Aside from being better able to reflect national priorities, this bottom-up approach has the added benefit of bringing immedi-

ate resources and attention to bear on issues that directly affect the lives of working men and women.

Ms. TZOTZE-LANARA (Worker, Greece)

We firstly congratulate the Director-General for the achievement and the work reflected in the Reports presented to this Conference. We also commend the blend of humanity, social concern and insight that, in the presentation of the Report, underpin the Director-General's analysis of the key challenges surrounding the Decent Work Agenda in today's complex global context.

Decent work, linked this year to the concept of broad sustainability and equality and equipped with the necessary policy tools and operative alliances, can become more than just an agenda; it can present us with a vision.

At the same time, the six key challenges highlight the impediments that stand between us and this vision of social justice, equality, and sustainable development in the context of a human globalization. They provide cause for grave concern.

Against the backdrop of widening inequalities within and across countries, dominant patterns of growth favour the better off rather than the poor. As corporate profits explode, millionaires steadily multiply but poverty spreads out along with precarious work conditions and exploitation.

Europe, one of the world's richest regions, is not immune at all with above average poverty rates for children at 20 per cent, and for the elderly at 18 per cent. Severe and persistent discrimination at work seems to fuel this vicious circle of poverty and social exclusion.

In this context, we welcome the timely reiteration that, for the ILO, labour is not a commodity.

We equally welcome the reiteration of the ILO Constitution that "injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people" ultimately imperils "the peace and harmony of the world".

Indeed, a deficit in social justice ultimately puts peace in danger. It potentially breeds armed conflict, violence and senseless bloodshed, as it did in Palestine, in Iraq, and wherever else in the world intolerance, arrogance and greed prevail over civilization and peaceful coexistence in a way that is morally, politically and historically unacceptable.

It is equally unacceptable that arrogance and greed also combine to destroy the world's natural resources in a way which ultimately deprives mankind of sustainable development, of a coherent future.

In this grim landscape, there is a way to assure mankind of a coherent future. Tripartism and social dialogue can foster and motivate effective balanced policies. This, however, cannot be achieved in a system that, as the Report correctly assesses, is based on a fundamental flaw: on the belief that markets can replace public policy in balancing economic, social and environmental needs.

Tripartism cannot exist if the labour constituent is destabilized. The wage squeeze and the decline of the labour income share in gross domestic products (GDPs) are all the more alarming when across the globe we are increasingly confronted with aggressive, anti-union behaviour in the service of reducing wages and benefits and violating labour rights.

Trade unionists are murdered in cold blood in many countries, like Colombia, that, in a truly inconceivable way, was left out of our deliberations this year.

In my country, Greece, too, an attempt to dismantle a functioning industrial relations system is regrettably evolving. Successive legislation has unilaterally restricted the collective agreements scope as illustrated by the case of the bank employees' pension funds.

Only last May, the Committee on Freedom of Association requested the Government cease all interference with the collective agreements by which the supplementary pension funds of bank employees were set up, and recommended consultations.

Even more deplorably, and relating to the Director-General's remarks about high-risk investments, a blatant example of what we call "casino capitalism" is under way shaking the foundations of our social security system.

While pension reform is very much in the open, huge amounts of public pension fund assets were unscrupulously invested in so-called structured, or leveraged high-risk bonds, causing serious and irrecoverable losses in major pension funds and seriously undermining the future of social security in our country.

So, on a final note, we cannot but applaud the warning of the Director-General in this respect, and voice our mounting concern, together with the international trade union movement, over this new powerful, non-transparent, non-regulated and aggressive financial activity that affects not only workers but constitutes a new global threat to the wider community and to the stability of our system at large.

Decent work and development need sustainable and responsible capital investments, not shadowy firms specializing in aggressive takeovers and asset stripping.

Original Arabic: Mr. AL-SAEDI (Worker, Iraq)

It gives me pleasure and honour to convey to you the greetings of millions of Iraqi workers who stand together proudly in support of their federation, the General Federation of Iraqi Workers. They pin their hopes on the International Labour Conference to give attention to workers and trade unions in Iraq in order to address their situation in the wake of the United States' occupation and its consequences, including widespread unemployment, the prevalence of child labour, the closure of thousands of factories, deteriorations in the economic, health and social situation, an increase organized crime and terrorist acts which have caused the deaths of many innocent people. A large number of labour leaders have also been killed, threatened or displaced. In this context, United States forces stormed the headquarters of the General Federation in April 2007, and destroyed equipment, files and assets, for no reason. This ignominious conduct contradicts the inviolability of trade union organizations and human rights.

The workers of Iraq constitute an effective power in Iraqi society and are resolved to build up their country and resist the policies of globalization and the privatization of oil resources, education, health and services. They contribute to the establishment of the rule of law and support measures to improve infrastructure in all sectors, especially industry agriculture and services, and to create job opportunities in order to reduce unemployment and criminality and lay the foundations of a society in which equality, dignity and justice reign. The workers stand proudly in support of their Federation, but the Fed-

eration is being hampered in its activities by Decision No 8750 of 8 August 2005, which confiscated the assets of association and trade unions.

In spite of this difficult and complicated situation what we see on the ground, and which instils hope in us to look with confidence towards our future, is a close and sound relationship between the three social partners, together with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for our Federation. This is embodied in the participation of workers' representatives in the high national committee for employment, labour inspection committees, the industrial services committee and the executive board of the social security fund. They also take part in studies and research, are involved in the preparation of the labour code and the social security code, and participate in the tripartite consultative committee. These efforts have been crowned by the decision of the Ministry to reopen workers' education centres.

We would like to express our appreciation to the ILO for its dedication to establishing a social framework that guarantees peace, stability and prosperity, which go hand in hand with social justice, for workers as well as employers. We would also like to thank all the international, regional and Arab organizations, which together with cultural institutions have supported the struggle of the Iraqi workers and the Iraqi people.

Mr. GRYSHCENKO (Employer, Ukraine)

Allow me to greet you on behalf of the Ukrainian employers and express our full support for the principles and ideas set out in the Director-General's Report, and also to emphasize the importance of ensuring sustainable development for decent work.

In the context of globalization and increased competition, we are facing new challenges which can only be overcome through a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, combining economic, social and environmental components. In such conditions, it is essential to strike a balance between flexibility and protection, which would ensure both increased enterprise competitiveness and provide firm guarantees for the protection of workers on the labour market.

The development of sustainable enterprises and stable positive indicators reflecting employment and social protection – all these are interdependent and can only be achieved through collective efforts at the national and global levels. Here the ILO has an important consolidating role to play, with its unique tripartite structure which can determine the level of convergence between state policy and market mechanisms needed to provide the necessary balance for sustainable development.

One priority task for the Ukrainian employers is the improvement of the legislative framework governing the labour market. The tripartite groups are actively working on adjusting legislation and social dialogue institutions to the changing structures of the market, first of all, with a view to securing full compliance with fundamental principles and rights at work. This is evidenced by our new Act on social dialogue, which is the outcome of joint efforts and contains innovative solutions for the labour market and the Ukrainian economy.

We have received considerable support in our efforts from the ILO and its experts. We would like to thank the ILO for the very high level of expert assistance provided towards solving these problems.

The focus of this session of the Conference is on how to achieve decent work together with an efficient and stable economy and sustainable enterprises.

Accordingly, while welcoming this approach and the work being done by the ILO and the Conference on the whole, we would like to draw your attention to the need to strengthen the role of social dialogue. We would emphasize the fact that only strong employers' organizations that are politically neutral, independent and democratic can be responsible and reliable partners.

One can hardly overestimate the role of the IOE and the ILO in these processes.

A real process of democratization of Ukrainian society is evidenced by the results of the Third Congress of the Federation of Employers of Ukraine, the biggest employers' organization in our country. I would like to tell you that the decisions taken by that Congress have depoliticized the Federation of Employers of Ukraine, making it a truly democratic organization based on the principles of the ILO and the IOE.

Unfortunately, however, there is still a risk of outside interference in this process.

We would like to express the hope that legal recognition of the democratic principles adopted at our Congress will be obtained soon.

We would like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia and the ILO for all the support you have given us in these recent endeavours.

Ms. HARRE (*Worker, New Zealand*)

I will begin my contribution this morning with a short traditional Maori greeting that acknowledges the diversity and unity of those in this room.

E nga iwi

E nga reo

e nga karangatanga maha o nga hau e wha

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou tatou katoa

My job here is to respond on behalf of New Zealand workers to the Director-General's Report to the Conference. We appreciate the forthright way in which he has exposed shortcomings in progress towards social, environmental and economic sustainability. We agree that by handing much of its responsibility to the free market, the policy establishment has facilitated the transfer of wealth from workers to owners and greater income inequality within and between countries.

Constraining the exercise of property rights, including the rights of owners of capital, is a fundamental role of public policy and also a central purpose of this Organization. That is what labour standards do.

Last century's pact between business and labour enabled economic development in the Western industrialized countries through long-term private investment, public investment in social and physical infrastructure, and the welfare state. But agreements were only reached because workers were organized industrially and politically. Securing an environment for growth required employers to reach agreement with a confident and organized international workers' movement.

Thus, the values underpinning the foundation of the ILO, expressed in the cornerstones of social dialogue and collective bargaining, were necessary conditions for the Western development model last century. Yet, today's prevailing economic model

generally treats those values as obstacles, rather than assets.

In his Report the Director-General makes a strong business case for international labour standards as a development imperative. However, a renewed commitment by ILO constituents, and in particular those who contravene its basic tenets, requires our intellectual belief in the importance of labour standards, social dialogue and collective bargaining to be demonstrated in practical terms. That, in turn, requires much more support for workers' collective organization.

We want an equal voice at the workplace, industry and national policy-making levels, as well as in this Organization. Labour market deregulation in New Zealand in the 1990s has had a sustained negative impact on workers' power at the workplace level. This problem remains despite industrial relations law reform based on the promotion of collective bargaining and improved workplace organizing rights.

Decent jobs in the manufacturing sector have increasingly been replaced with precarious, low-paid jobs in a growing domestic services sector – including in the areas previously dominated by the unpaid work of women, like caring for our elders. To restore and improve on the decent work won through industrial and political struggles last century, in New Zealand we will have to overcome three related obstacles.

First, the limitations of enterprise-based collective bargaining. With more workers employed by companies that compete viciously for market share in the domestic services sector, we need to extend collective bargaining to whole industries.

Second, and despite the organizing rights provided by law, the diminished capacity of unions to reach out to the vast majority of workers in the private sector who are neither union members nor covered by collective agreements.

And thirdly, the continuing hostility of employers to unionization and collective bargaining.

A genuine tripartite commitment to decent work, underpinned by social dialogue and collective bargaining, will assist us in overcoming these obstacles. Indeed, by virtue of our presence here each of the constituent groups in the ILO has taken on a duty to do just that:

- government, through its regulatory, public sector employment and service procurement roles;
- employers' organizations, by building support for worker participation and helping overcome resistance to collective bargaining among their members;
- unions, by reaching beyond the traditional industrial workforce and sharing our resources to organize the new workforce in today's industries and across the globe;
- and the ILO, by promoting worker participation and helping to build the capacity of workers to engage in all relevant forums.

We particularly hope that governments will accept the challenge put down here in this Conference by the President of Chile to demonstrate commitment to the ILO principles by actively rebuilding union capacity and influence. The ILO commitment to social justice is timeless. However, history tells us that building the power of workers to organize is the best tool we have for achieving this ideal.

I would first of all like to thank and congratulate the Director-General for the quality of his Report, which takes up the major challenges of tripartism and social dialogue involved in promoting decent work for sustainable development.

I would not need to go into the details of the Report, for the Report has vividly affirmed all the pertinent issues and the major challenges facing us all in relation to tripartism and social dialogue. We believe that we need to demonstrate our readiness to meet the challenges, being hand-in-hand with advancing the Decent Work Agenda, effectively in harmony with our country-specific decent work programmes and in alignment with the guidance and support of the ILO by: facing strategically the threat posed by globalization to a balanced and sustainable development; facing knowledgeably the wage squeeze and increasing inequalities that are threatening sustainable development in general and that of African countries in particular; generating timely labour market information that follows the standard labour concepts and definitions, to ensure that labour statistics reflect the real situation of workers more accurately; and introducing the cash-for-work programme as self-targeting basic social assistance to overcome abject poverty.

We do indeed share the conviction expressed in the Report of the Director-General that tripartism and social dialogue can play a central role to achieve fair, productive and competitive market economies that are essential for sustainable national development. Therefore, let me brief you on my country's position concerning this endeavour.

The Eritrean people have played a commendable role in the struggle for independence and nation-building in which prosperity and social justice prevail. I would like to underscore the fact that this active participation of the Eritrean people in the affairs of the nation has been a very significant driving force in promoting socio-economic transformation in the country. Recognizing this fact, my Government is taking the necessary steps towards creating a more favourable ground that would help reinforce its people's endeavours.

In connection with this, my Government established the popular development campaign, which includes multi-sector development programmes which have so far started to register encouraging achievements that would contribute to the improvement of people's standard of living. In this development campaign, tripartite cooperation played a significant role.

Another important initiative undertaken by the Government is the cash-for-work policy, a self-targeting social assistance. After evaluating the negative effects of dependence on food hand-outs, cash-for-work was introduced in 2005 and has been implemented extensively, registering encouraging outcomes.

In terms of human resource development in general and particularly targeting young people and females, several colleges have been opened and are absorbing quite a significant number of the target groups. Their products are expected to partly quench the demand of qualified staff in the different sectors. Similarly, other reinforcement activities are under way in the human resource development area.

Although HIV/AIDS prevalence is low in Eritrea, we are conscious of its effect on the productive force. Thus, to keep our workforce safe, HIV/AIDS at the workplace programmes are initiated jointly at tripartite level.

With the proper implementation of the economic and social development strategies we have at hand, we hope to overcome the manpower requirements of the country and offer decent work and life to all. In order to strengthen the capacity of tripartism cooperation to promote dialogue, we are heading to form a tripartite social dialogue council.

Sustainable development cannot be attained without peace. Therefore, the "no war, no peace" situation in which we are trapped now has become an additional challenge to the challenges mentioned in the Director-General's Report, preventing us from implementing our development plans as we intend.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to express my hope that the ILO will inject more supportive energy for the full implementation of the issues raised in the Director-General's Report and by previous speakers, so that it can enhance the efforts of countries towards sustainable development.

Mr. SUNMONU (*representative, Organization of African Trade Union Unity*)

Let me, on behalf of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), which represents African workers and trade unions of all trade union tendencies, congratulate you and the other members of your bureau on your well deserved election. I also express our appreciation to the Director-General, Ambassador Juan Somavia, for his excellent reader-friendly Report.

Allow me to comment on the theme of the Director-General's Report: *Decent work for sustainable development*. Coming from Africa, I am proud that African Heads of State and Government were the first world leaders to adopt the Decent Work Agenda as the best solution for poverty at their extraordinary Summit in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in September 2004. Since then, the Decent Work Agenda has been universally adopted. What then remains is moving from theory to practice and from rhetoric to action.

The neo-liberal economic paradigm that constitutes the main pillar of globalization today is rightly characterized by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization as "generating unbalanced outcomes both between and within countries. These global imbalances are morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable". This is because neo-liberalism puts profits before people. Time has therefore come to change to a people-centred economic paradigm that is "morally acceptable and politically sustainable".

In order to have a balanced approach to sustainable development, the Decent Work Agenda has to be linked to the basic needs development agenda which the ILO pioneered in the middle 1970s until it was smothered by the neo-liberal agenda of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These basic needs are: food, shelter (housing), health, education, water, energy, transport either by air, road, rail, sea or river and communications such as radio, television and ICTs, which constitute the parameters of the development or lack thereof, of any society anywhere in the world. They also constitute the main foundation for social and sustainable development.

They also constitute the greatest sources of creating hundreds of millions of decent jobs throughout the world. In addition, they constitute the greatest source of wealth creation for the majority of people in every country of the world. When wealth is created for the majority of the people, poverty disappears. There will also be peace and social and political stability, which are the main pillars of sustainable development.

We therefore call on the ILO to go back to the drawing board and come out with a combined Decent Work Agenda and basic needs development agenda.

Concerning UN reform, we advise that the ILO's tripartite identity and character should, under no circumstances, be compromised. There is also the need to strengthen the ILO's tripartite constituencies, particularly the workers, to enable them to play an effective role in the globalization process.

Our organization and its affiliates received technical and financial support from the ILO Regional Office for Africa, the Bureau for Workers Activities (ACTRAV) and from employment, social protection and social dialogue sectors, for our activities throughout Africa, for which we are grateful to the respective Directors and Executive-Directors. We are also grateful for the support given by the Director-General and his officers to our Guinea trade union leaders during their struggle for good governance, democracy and accountability in Guinea.

We call for the strengthening of the capacity of African workers and trade unions in the following areas: workers' education, cooperatives, gender mainstreaming, youth employment, international labour standards, occupational safety and health, social security, social dialogue and strengthening of tripartism.

Please permit me to congratulate the Director-General for his Report: *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. An impartial reading of the well-documented report will lead one to the inescapable conclusion that the treatment of the Palestinian workers and peoples by the Israeli occupation forces amounts to genocide of the Palestinian people. The OATUU therefore calls for the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories in strict compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions Nos 242, 338, 1397 and 1515. All the Palestinian money illegally seized by the Israeli Government should be unconditionally released to the Palestinian Authority. The daily harassment, ill-treatment and humiliation of the Palestinian people should stop. The international community should resume financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The ILO should increase its technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority, workers' and employers' organizations.

The only way peace will return to the Middle East is through justice for the Palestinian people. Israel should therefore withdraw from all occupied Palestinian and Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan Heights, the Lebanese Shebaa farms and East Jerusalem. The State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as capital should be established and guaranteed by the United Nations, alongside the State of Israel.

Original arabe: M. DJEMAM (représentant, Confédération internationale des syndicats arabes)

J'aimerais remercier le Directeur général du Bureau international du Travail pour son rapport relatif

au suivi de la Déclaration relative aux principes et droits fondamentaux au travail, rapport qui est extrêmement important et qui nous appelle à travailler de concert, afin de mettre en œuvre toutes les conventions fondamentales en vue de réduire la pauvreté et d'éradiquer le chômage. Ces conventions sont destinées à protéger les droits des travailleurs et à approfondir le dialogue social, qui est l'un des piliers du travail décent, susceptible de garantir la dignité humaine dans les pays arabes.

Le Directeur général a abordé dans son rapport la situation des travailleurs arabes en Palestine et dans les autres territoires arabes occupés, et les souffrances subies par le peuple palestinien sous l'occupation israélienne. Cependant, ce rapport, et malgré le progrès réalisé dans son élaboration, n'a malheureusement pas reflété de façon suffisante les effets destructeurs de la colonisation israélienne et des pratiques inhumaines exercées par celle-ci et qui se manifestent par des assassinats, des déplacements forcés, des arrestations, l'expulsion de travailleurs de leurs lieux de travail et leur appauvrissement, la destruction de leurs maisons, la construction du mur de séparation raciste et le blocus imposé aux civils palestiniens. La politique criminelle appliquée à l'encontre des Palestiniens ne diffère pas de celle utilisée dans le Golan syrien et les fermes libanaises de Sheba où les travailleurs sont exposés aux pires souffrances.

C'est pourquoi nous appelons l'OIT et la communauté internationale dans son ensemble à prendre les mesures nécessaires et pratiques pour soutenir le peuple palestinien, pour qu'il puisse recouvrer sa liberté et sa dignité, lever le blocus qui lui est imposé, l'aider à faire face aux effets de l'occupation israélienne, assurer l'application des décisions internationales ainsi que le retrait total de tous les territoires arabes occupés en Palestine, dans le Golan syrien et dans les fermes libanaises de Sheba. Nous appelons aussi la communauté internationale à déployer des efforts supplémentaires, afin que soit mis un terme à l'occupation anglo-américaine de l'Iraq, afin que le peuple iraquien puisse exercer son droit à l'autodétermination. Nous demandons à l'administration américaine de cesser son ingérence dans les affaires intérieures du Soudan et ses menaces continues à l'encontre de la République arabe syrienne.

Tout en appréciant les efforts déployés par l'OIT pour défendre les libertés et les droits syndicaux, nous regrettons ce qui se passe dans certains pays arabes du Golfe: les gouvernements de l'Arabie saoudite, du Qatar et des Emirats arabes unis pratiquent des violations des droits des travailleurs, tardent à reconnaître le droit d'organisation syndicale et de constituer de véritables organisations de travailleurs, libres, indépendantes et démocratiques. En Arabie saoudite par exemple, les autorités interdisent la constitution de syndicats et privent les travailleurs de l'exercice de toute activité syndicale; les travailleurs étrangers sont exploités de la part des employeurs et de leurs garants, et vivent des situations proches de l'esclavage.

Quant à Bahreïn, le personnel du secteur public est privé de l'exercice du droit syndical et tout travailleur qui exerce une activité syndicale est soumis à des exactions. Le gouvernement interdit encore la grève dans 17 secteurs. Enfin, la loi sur le travail a été élaborée sans consulter les travailleurs.

J'aimerais à cet égard féliciter l'Union générale des travailleurs algériens pour avoir élaboré une

charte économique et sociale qui doit servir d'exemple pour tous les autres pays arabes.

J'aimerais remercier également ACTRAV et le bureau régional de Beyrouth pour leur collaboration fructueuse avec notre mouvement syndical arabe.

Permettez-moi également de féliciter les travailleurs dans le Sultanat d'Oman qui ont pu réaliser des acquis tout à fait louables.

Nous espérons davantage de collaboration technique pour la région arabe et l'extension de l'usage de l'arabe à l'OIT.

Mr. KEARNEY (*representative, International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation*)

Were poverty wages, long hours and appalling working conditions the passport to sustainable development, the key textile, clothing and shoe producing countries would be economic and social chart-toppers instead of wallowing in poverty.

Such industries have highlighted, over the past two decades, how exploitative working conditions dehumanize and impoverish workers, their families and communities.

Take Ratnamma. Heavily pregnant she continued working at Shalini Creations, part of Texport Overseas, till the last days of March, fearful of losing her monthly attendance bonus. Already in labour, she had to beg factory managers to let her go home. Only after much hassle and delay did she get permission. No one was allowed to go with her. A few metres from the factory gate she gave birth in the street, cut the umbilical cord herself and struggled home only to find her baby was dead.

Ask Amma, if you could. A few weeks earlier, tired and ill, she too begged to leave Triangle Apparels, part of Gokaldas Exports Limited. She was shouted at, abused and told to resume working. At her wits' end she went to the toilets and hanged herself.

Both factories are in Bangalore, now a powerhouse of India's booming garment industry. Workers there dare not even complain about conditions.

One employer, fibers and fabrics industries, under attack for alleged abusive labour practices, has succeeded in having court-imposed gagging orders applied to its critics, including the trade union representing its workers. Fibers and fabrics industries are making a mockery of labour law, international labour standards and freedom of speech, while the Indian Government stands silently by.

Workers at Hermosa in El Salvador understand the meaning of indecent work and exploitation. After their employer went bust, they were owed US\$850,000 in unpaid wages, benefits and severance. The well-heeled sporting goods brands profiting from sourcing from the factory ignored their plight. Only after extreme pressure did they volunteer a shameful US\$36,000, less than 5 per cent of the amount owed.

In Turkey, workers in the sector slave for low wages with few rights. Less than a fifth are registered, so 3 million textile and garment workers cannot even join a trade union. When workers do organize, as at Metraco in Istanbul, they are harassed by the employer, intimidated by the authorities and fired. Even if they succeed in legal action, they need only be compensated, not reinstated. So employers, at small cost, destroy union organization with impunity, while the Turkish Government stands silently by.

And where is the ILO? Why is it so powerless to help the poorest workers?

Take Workwear Lanka, where 356 lost their jobs when they joined a union and where the Committee on Freedom of Association ruled they should be reinstated. Workwear Lanka still prospers, as does another company, G.P. Garments, who used the same dismissal tactics to rid itself of union organization, firing 518 workers. The Sri Lankan Government stands idly by while these workers remain jobless.

If the ILO is serious about promoting decent work, it must make greater efforts in sectors like textiles, clothing and footwear, concentrate on key issues such as a living wage, working hours, contract labour and how to ensure real freedom of association and collective bargaining. And it must force member governments to apply standards actively.

The payment of a living wage lies at the heart of the ILO Constitution and is embedded in the Declaration of Philadelphia. In practice it is ignored. In most countries, the legal minimum wage is a fraction of what a worker needs to live decently. Often it is not increased for years and is treated everywhere as a ceiling, not a floor. Sustainable development is not possible, for wages earned, even after excessive overtime, do not reach subsistence level. First area for stronger ILO global action.

Poverty level wages force workers and their families to work excessive hours. Recently, garment workers in Sri Lanka have had to work around the clock and twelve-year-olds in China, producing Beijing Olympic goods, are working 15 hours a day, seven days a week. Being worked to death is not the route to sustainable development. Second area for stronger ILO action.

Short-term contracts and contract labour bedevil the sector in countries like Cambodia. Without job security, workers are defenceless, fired if they even think of organizing and cheated of the benefits that go with permanent employment. Rootless work is not the route to sustainable development. Third area for stronger ILO action.

The key to decent work lies in the ability of workers to act together and to bargain with their employer. But, the exercise of these rights becomes more and more difficult. Daily workers who try to organize or oppose exploitative employers are fired, blacklisted and denied the right to ever work again. Those trying to bargain are harassed and intimidated and forced out of workplaces as workers at TOS, part of Hanes Brands, in the Dominican Republic, have recently discovered. Neutering workers is not the route to sustainable development. Fourth area for stronger ILO global action.

Were governments to shoulder their responsibilities, these excesses would disappear. Unfortunately, lethargy, incompetence or downright corruption paralyse many governments. Laws are enacted, but not enforced. Factory and labour inspectorates shrink. Justice disappears as labour cases languish in the courts for years. Government inertia is not the route to sustainable development. Fifth area for stronger ILO global action.

Sustainable development demands decent work. Decent work demands that governments be energetic in the pursuit of worker rights. Universal worker rights demand a sharply focused ILO with a lot more power and influence than today, interacting with other international agencies harnessing globalization, linking global trade and labour standards,

and capable of ensuring that member States do more than pay lip service to key ILO Conventions.

Put simply, the ILO must urgently grow teeth or stop pretending it is the defender of worker rights.

(The sitting adjourned at 2.15 p.m.)

Nineteenth sitting

Thursday, 14 June 2007, 2.40 p.m.

Presidents: Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Mr. Barde and Mr. Sulka

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

The PRESIDENT

I declare open the nineteenth sitting of the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

We shall now continue the general discussion of the reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

The sitting continues with delegates' statements.

The transcript of speeches made in a language other than English, French or Spanish is produced in the language chosen by the country concerned for the purpose of official correspondence with the ILO.

M. PIERRE (*travailleur, Haïti*)

Haïti, après une longue période de transition, cherche le chemin pouvant conduire le pays vers un Etat de droit.

De l'avis des travailleurs, le gouvernement manifeste une volonté politique, une volonté marquée par les actes suivants: la réalisation de séances de travail avec les syndicats au plus haut sommet de l'Etat sur des questions d'intérêt national. Mais il reste encore à espérer des résultats au bénéfice de la classe des travailleurs.

Dans certains secteurs, le dialogue est établi. Tel est le cas dans le secteur de l'éducation, avec la plate-forme des syndicats d'enseignants.

Les conventions n^{os} 138 et 182 relatives au travail des enfants sont ratifiées. Désormais, le nombre de conventions fondamentales ratifiées par Haïti passe de six à huit.

Les conflits éclatant dans la zone franche à Ouanaminthe font l'objet d'une attention soutenue au ministère des Affaires sociales et du Travail.

Le gouvernement, en quête de la création d'emplois, est dévoué dans le cadre de la loi Hope. Cependant, malgré tous ces actes de bonne volonté, qui ne sont d'ailleurs pas suffisants, permettez-moi de saisir l'occasion que m'offre cette tribune pour partager avec vous certaines informations.

A la 95^e session de la Conférence internationale du Travail, en juin 2006, aucun délégué des travailleurs n'a été désigné.

La Commission tripartite de consultation et d'arbitrage, mise en place en référence à la convention n^o 144 de l'OIT, n'a pu mener à bien sa mission en raison des moyens financiers limitant son fonc-

tionnement. Un tel comportement du gouvernement a des impacts négatifs sur le dialogue social dans mon pays.

Le Code du travail, vieux de plus d'une vingtaine d'années, fait toujours l'objet de projets de rénovation. La convention n^o 144 de l'OIT, base de la consultation tripartite, n'a pas fait encore l'objet de ratification.

La corruption qui gangrène les institutions reste encore au stade de débat, de colloque, car les mesures visant à mettre les corrupteurs hors d'état de corrompre tardent encore.

Le chômage et la pauvreté atteignent un niveau record. Le salaire minimum de 70 gourdes, soit 1,9 dollar E.-U., est inacceptable, car les gens à ce niveau sont qualifiés comme des gens pauvres.

Certains employeurs profitent de la faiblesse de la législation haïtienne pour exploiter les travailleurs. Un patron qui ne paie que 90 gourdes, soit 2,2 dollars E.-U. par jour, a osé déclarer qu'il paie plus que le salaire minimum, alors qu'il ne se situe même pas encore au voisinage d'un salaire décent. Voilà pourquoi il est nécessaire de réviser le salaire minimum et de fixer un minimum réel permettant au travailleur et à la travailleuse de se nourrir, par exemple.

C'est aussi l'occasion pour les travailleurs haïtiens de s'adresser aux différentes délégations et Etats Membres de l'OIT sur la situation des travailleurs migrants. Il n'est pas normal qu'Haïti reçoive ses rapatriés de la mer, des frontières, humiliés, maltraités et parfois morts dans des conditions douteuses. Voilà pourquoi nous demandons aux pays hôtes de réviser leur structure d'accueil, car la mondialisation ne saurait accentuer seulement une concentration de richesses où les pays riches se regroupent pour devenir de plus en plus riches en laissant les pays pauvres croupir dans la misère.

Les tenants de la mondialisation n'ont pas pensé à mettre également l'accent sur les droits économiques et sociaux, notamment le travail décent, et enfin le principe du non-refoulement des travailleurs migrants.

Dans un monde solidaire, les travailleurs ne devraient plus continuer à être victimes des discriminations dans les pays hôtes. C'est pourquoi nous demandons à l'OIT d'intervenir afin de permettre à ces travailleurs d'avoir un statut qui leur garantit la protection et le droit de vivre dans des conditions humaines acceptables par tous.

La République d'Haïti vient de connaître des périodes de crise. Aujourd'hui, elle s'efforce de passer de l'instabilité à la stabilité pour arriver à la paix, une paix qui ne peut être durable sans la re-

construction de l'économie haïtienne. En ce sens, nous demandons à la communauté internationale et aux pays amis d'Haïti d'intervenir par des actes concrets dans le cadre de la coopération et par des investissements capables de générer des flux économiques.

Quant à l'OIT, nous croyons fermement qu'elle ne peut agir seule. Elle doit agir dans le cadre d'une politique coopérante. Voilà pourquoi nous demandons à l'OIT non seulement de renforcer les liens existant entre les Etats Membres, mais encore d'aider les organisations de travailleurs, notamment Haïti, à se renforcer par le biais de la formation, de l'assistance technique et d'autres moyens correspondant à leurs besoins.

Ainsi, la lutte pour le travail décent est une nécessité. A notre avis, l'intégration de cette lutte à l'intérieur de la mondialisation est importante, car elle permettra probablement aux tenants de la mondialisation de réparer ses dégâts et de ne plus continuer.

Le tripartisme est le fondement même de l'OIT. Chaque partie doit assumer ses responsabilités. Quant au gouvernement d'Haïti, c'est l'occasion de comprendre qu'il y a nécessité de renforcer la structure tripartite, car c'est par cette structure que l'on peut arriver à établir un dialogue permanent et constructif, dans l'intérêt de tous.

Nous tenons à réaffirmer que c'est par le dialogue que l'on peut jeter les bases pour le respect des principes fondamentaux au travail représentant à la fois une fin et un moyen. Une fin quand il s'agit des droits de l'homme au travail et qu'à ce titre, ils doivent être respectés, un moyen parce que la jouissance de ces droits est le chemin le plus sûr pour réaliser les progrès pour tous et pour toutes dans les domaines afférents au travail.

Mr. THOMPSON (*Minister of State, Bahamas*)

I am especially honoured to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Government and people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and to outline our national labour agenda within the context of the Report of the Director-General.

This is indeed special to me, Mr. President, as my country has only last month, under our democratic Constitution, held general elections which resulted in the formation of a new Government that appreciates the invaluable contributions to nation building by employers and workers alike.

My Government has committed itself to strengthening and improving labour administration; further strengthening its labour relations through bipartite and tripartite consultation; enhancing and simplifying protocols for trade union recognition; establishing proper and well-organized labour exchanges, where labour market information can be used to measure inter alia decent work deficits; instituting a more effective system for the settlement of disputes between employers and employees; introducing a system of apprenticeship in essential disciplines such as the building trades, motor mechanics, appliance repairs, printing, garment manufacture, and furniture-making; providing incentives for private firms to offer profit-sharing arrangements and share/stock options to their employees; promoting technical and vocational training in the public and private sectors; expanding flexitime in the public sector and encourage its expansion in the private sector; and assisting unions and others in the opera-

tion and management of community centres and day-care facilities for children of working parents.

In his Report submitted to this Conference, the Director-General has, with a sense of urgency, called on all delegates to become keenly aware of the challenges that exist within the context of the Conference agenda – challenges that could threaten to derail all that tripartism and social dialogue have accomplished thus far.

The Bahamas will continue to work with its social partners, as well as our CARICOM brothers and sisters and the subregional directorate of the ILO, to advance the Decent Work Agenda within our region. We shall also network with our partners through the United Nations to underline the critical work of the ILO and the need for the multilateral system to be more effective.

The Bahamas, like several other island nations, is relatively flat. This factor, coupled with our tourism-based economy, places us squarely at the front of the fight for more focus to be given by the industrialized countries to the devastating effects of greenhouse emissions and global warming. We therefore join with our brothers and sisters of the region in calling for a systematic and unified approach to this issue and the already obvious climatic changes that are now occurring.

We therefore applaud the Director-General for his focus and we agree that there needs to be, as a matter of priority, a major research and policy effort on the part of the ILO, in conjunction with other international agencies, to determine the effects of a paradigm shift within the context of work patterns as a direct result of having to move to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption – all in an effort to reverse the current destructive path of global warming.

In closing, let me reiterate my country's call for a unified tripartite approach to advancing the critical work of the ILO and the even more crucial value of social dialogue to this process. The ILO has earned its stripes. The ILO has championed the cause of the marginalized and the downtrodden. The ILO was relevant in 1919 and is even more relevant in 2007.

Long live the social partners! Long live social dialogue! And long live the ILO!

Original arabe: M. EL AZZOUZI (travailleur, Maroc)

Au nom de la délégation des travailleurs du Maroc et, à travers elle, au nom de tous les travailleurs et travailleuses du Maroc, je suis heureux d'exprimer toute notre considération pour le travail sérieux accompli par le BIT sous la conduite de son Directeur général, et pour le rapport qu'il a présenté à cette Conférence qui constitue le thème principal de l'ordre du jour de cette session. Ce rapport exhaustif et objectif a en fait abordé les formes de discrimination au travail dans toute leur diversité.

La délégation syndicale marocaine approuve le contenu du rapport et les analyses qu'il avance et nous estimons qu'il a mis le doigt sur les causes profondes de la discrimination, qu'il a donné les réponses nécessaires et mis tous les acteurs concernés devant leurs responsabilités. De même qu'il a élaboré les plans d'action requis afin que les mandants s'acquittent de leurs tâches.

L'attention accordée au secteur de la pêche, le rappel de la dimension sociale de la mondialisation ainsi que le fait d'avoir consacré aux entreprises durables et au renforcement des capacités de l'OIT deux commissions principales sont une preuve de la

vision tournée vers l'avenir qui requiert la participation de tous dans les débats afin d'accroître l'efficacité et la bonne gouvernance permettant de relever les défis qui touchent aux droits et acquis des forces actives dans le monde.

Le Maroc connaît actuellement une période transitoire s'orientant vers la consécration des droits de l'homme tels que reconnus internationalement et l'élargissement des libertés publiques, y compris la liberté syndicale et l'élaboration de programmes dont le but est de lutter contre les phénomènes sociaux inquiétants tels que la pauvreté, la marginalisation, le chômage et l'habitat insalubre.

Bien que persistent encore certains abus que nous signalerons plus loin, la situation des travailleurs au Maroc a connu une amélioration, surtout depuis l'approbation du Code du travail et son entrée en vigueur depuis environ trois ans, devenant ainsi la référence légale pour traiter les conflits du travail à travers le dialogue social, que ce soit au niveau du gouvernement ou aux niveaux local, sectoriel ou dans les entreprises privées.

La baisse marquée des conflits de travail, au Maroc, est due en partie à l'élargissement relatif de la liberté syndicale et à l'activation des mécanismes de négociation collective. De même que les syndicats marocains sont devenus un partenaire essentiel dans le traitement des grands dossiers et, notamment, le code de couverture médicale qui englobe maintenant tous les professionnels et les artisans ainsi que l'aide médicale accordée aux pauvres et aux personnes à faible revenu, ou encore tout ce qui concerne la réforme des régimes de retraite destinée à établir un régime juste et équitable pour tous les travailleurs. Je saisis d'ailleurs cette occasion pour appeler le BIT à faire profiter de son expérience le Comité national marocain chargé de réformer les systèmes de retraite.

Ces aspects positifs n'excluent pas la persistance de phénomènes négatifs tels que l'absence d'une institution établie pour le dialogue social. Celui-ci demeure en effet sporadique et ne s'exerce qu'en réponse à des pressions ou à des revendications dans des institutions publiques ou des entreprises privées. De même, l'application des dispositions du Code du travail reste peu satisfaisante, et s'y ajoutent l'absence de réglementation du travail des employés de maison et l'extension du secteur informel.

Malgré l'élargissement des libertés syndicales et du droit d'organisation, il y a encore des violations de ces droits fondamentaux que l'on constate au travers des licenciements et des transferts arbitraires auxquelles recourent certaines entreprises publiques et des branches de multinationales, mais aussi certaines dérives sécuritaires et des violations qui ont touché récemment le droit des centrales syndicales à manifester. De telles violations nous font craindre un recul et un retour en arrière alors que nous avons cru que le travail accompli par la Commission justice et réconciliation allait marquer une rupture entre deux époques.

Nous voudrions ici souligner la réponse positive de notre pays aux effets de la communauté internationale pour mettre fin au conflit du Sahara Occidental.

En ce qui concerne la situation dans les territoires arabes occupés, nous approuvons les observations faites par le groupe arabe au sujet du rapport du Secrétaire général et appelons à la cessation des assassinats et des actes de destruction perpétrés par Is-

raël contre le peuple palestinien et l'établissement de l'Etat palestinien avec pour capitale Al-Quods.

Nous affirmons également notre solidarité avec le peuple de l'Iraq frère et demandons l'intervention de la communauté internationale pour que cessent ses souffrances et que les forces d'occupation se retirent de son pays.

Le travail accompli par l'OIT confirme sa capacité à alléger les souffrances des travailleurs des pays du Sud et, notamment, en Afrique. Il lui est ainsi demandé de jouer un rôle essentiel en appelant les pays donateurs à s'acquitter de leurs engagements envers les pays en développement, à annuler les dettes des pays pauvres et adopter les mécanismes susceptibles de réduire les effets tragiques de la migration vers le Nord.

Je voudrais pour finir saluer la CSI et tous ceux qui ont œuvré à unifier le Front syndical mondial dans sa lutte contre les aspects négatifs de la mondialisation sauvage et la défense des acquis de tous les travailleurs du monde.

Sr. FAZIO (*trabajador, Uruguay*)

Los trabajadores de Uruguay presentes en esta Conferencia hemos analizado la Memoria introductoria predispuestos al estudio serio y detenido, pero ciertamente condicionados por una práctica vigente en sus estructuras que no nos permite alentar ni ser alentadores a la hora de bregar desde nuestra posición de actores sociales por la profundización del diálogo social y del tripartismo.

Entendemos, en primer lugar, que resulta por lo demás justo su análisis, sostenido en el reto a los distintos actores que conforma el sistema que integramos, para que, utilizando precisamente esos instrumentos, formulemos o apoyemos la formulación de políticas dirigidas al desarrollo sostenible en nuestros países, que garanticen el crecimiento con justicia social y que, por otra parte, apuntalando esas decisiones colaborem en la mejora de la eficacia institucional de la OIT.

Consideramos, en segundo lugar, que como trabajadores debemos continuar con la tarea de mejorar y modernizar las relaciones en el mundo del trabajo, precisamente apostando por la utilización de los mecanismos y las herramientas que están a nuestra disposición, como lo están a disposición de nuestro Gobierno y los empleadores de nuestro país.

En tercer lugar, nos toca reiterar, en el ámbito de esta Plenaria, que los trabajadores uruguayos no somos unos recién llegados al Tripartismo, ni consideramos una moda el diálogo social.

Siempre observamos con esperanza los resultados que conlleva la negociación colectiva de todas nuestras condiciones de trabajo, y sobre todo la visión que como trabajadores debemos construir para la estrategia de un nuevo modelo de desarrollo de nuestro país.

Pero, como también ya lo hemos manifestado en este mismo ámbito en pasadas Conferencias, debemos administrar adecuadamente nuestra esperanza.

Nos resulta, en este sentido, auspicioso y esperanzador el avance alcanzado desde la asunción en nuestro país del actual Gobierno de corte progresista, en lo que refiere a un sistema de relaciones laborales adecuado a la normativa nacional e internacional, que ampara nuestros derechos, que incluye especialmente la protección de la libertad sindical de conformidad con el Convenio núm. 98 de la OIT y que insta ámbitos de negociación colectiva en los sectores público y privado, incluyendo a

los trabajadores rurales y domésticos, aun a pesar de que el sector empleador mantiene viejas prácticas de represión antisindical, lo cual demuestra claramente su falta de cultura democrática y de respeto a los compromisos internacionales, a los cuales ha adherido nuestro país.

Asimismo, reconocemos los avances alcanzados en el tema de los derechos humanos, en relación al procesamiento de connotados terroristas de Estado que se mantenían impunes durante 30 años, que arrasaron durante el período de la dictadura militar con las libertades públicas y el derecho a la vida.

Al tiempo que reconocemos explícitamente estos avances, afirmamos categóricamente que Uruguay debe anular la ley de impunidad, por ser ésta contraria a todos los Convenios internacionales de derechos humanos a los que ha adherido nuestro país, y lograr la plena vigencia de la libertad y la justicia.

En cuarto lugar observamos que, a pesar de los esfuerzos de este organismo por colocar en la agenda del sistema multilateral el planteo estratégico que permita desarrollar planes y programas de trabajo decente, es decir, trabajo digno y sustentable, y a pesar de que la Memoria de la Conferencia que examinamos contiene una temática dirigida a sensibilizar y comprometer a los actores sociales que mantienen la responsabilidad de impulsar un desarrollo económico y social sostenible, con políticas coherentes en esa dirección y, fundamentalmente, la mejora en la eficacia inherente a la acción de esta Organización y el sistema multilateral, lo cierto es que, desde el punto de vista institucional, observamos un debilitamiento de las capacidades de los organismos pertinentes para dirigir las cuestiones vinculadas con el respeto y la observancia de las normas de la OIT en términos de eficacia.

Decimos, sin contemplación alguna, que en esta misma Conferencia, en su Comisión de normas, hemos asistido a una práctica de ciertos grupos empleadores que no dudamos en calificar como de chantaje, específicamente en el tratamiento del tema de las violaciones a la libertad sindical en Colombia.

Así, en esa Comisión y referido a la práctica de terrorismo de Estado que impulsan Gobiernos y empleadores, se aplicó una especie de veto dirigido a neutralizar e impedir la denuncia de los trabajadores del país, y cuyo cometido hace referencia a miles de asesinatos de dirigentes sindicales y a la represión antisindical por la vía de despidos, y en definitiva a una concepción autoritaria del gobierno, que, lejos de impulsar el diálogo y fomentar la sindicalización, es denunciada como partícipe de la represión más criminal.

Ya hemos expresado a la Comisión de normas, y lo reiteramos, que no es legítimo ni ético imponer o extender mandatos espurios contra países del Sur, mientras se baja la vista de modo cómplice pretendiendo no ver las violaciones flagrantes, masivas y sistemáticas de los derechos humanos que cometen algunos Gobiernos aliados al capital multinacional.

Esta conducta es violatoria del derecho humano fundamental a la libertad sindical, del derecho humano a la vida y a la libre expresión de las ideas, implica una conducta gubernamental abiertamente confrontativa con elementales principios de respeto a la vida y la integración social.

En este mismo sentido, el del debilitamiento de las capacidades de esta Organización y de los esfuerzos por modernizar el concepto manejado como

«gobernanza del mundo del trabajo», también observamos que ciertas tendencias, en principio dirigidas a lograr que más países ratifiquen más convenios, se desvían hacia una práctica inspirada en el esfuerzo estratégico del sector empleador nucleado en la Organización Internacional de Empleadores, por debilitar el marco normativo de la OIT sustituyendo sus normas de contenido imperativo y rango protector por otras más flexibles y menos abarcativas. Ya termino.

El concepto conocido como normas de aplicación progresiva, acuñado en esta misma Conferencia, en la Comisión del Sector Pesquero, ejemplifica el cuadro de situación al cual aludimos, y más allá del avance que para los trabajadores del sector implica en muchas partes del mundo la eventual adopción de un convenio y una recomendación, desnuda la estrategia de Gobiernos y empleadores de países del primer mundo en perjuicio y desmedro de los pescadores de países empobrecidos del resto del planeta. En definitiva, señor Presidente, los trabajadores uruguayos redoblamos nuestro compromiso con la dignidad, con el diálogo, con las apuestas por los planes y programas de esta Organización, pero, sobre todo, con los trabajadores del mundo y, en esta hora aciaga, para los compañeros de Colombia, hermanos latinoamericanos, con su demanda y su obstinada lucha por la libertad y la vida.

Mr. TABANI (*Employer, Pakistan*)

Let me begin by extending the greetings of the employers of Pakistan to the President and the delegates attending this 96th Session. We wish at the outset to compliment the Director-General on his Report to the Conference this year. It conveys to the tripartite constituents the advice to develop policy tools for a "green jobs initiative" aimed at achieving an environmentally sustainable process of development. This is in addition to his discussion on the wide range of issues on decent work deficits, moving forward on the Decent Work Agenda, the key issues for action as decent work has now become part of economic, social and environmental policies. He has highlighted the need to develop better methodologies to capture the reality of unemployment in developing countries and has emphasized the need for better data as being vital to ILO policy initiatives as well as measuring progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015.

This year I have had the honour of being the spokesperson for the Employers' group in the general discussion on strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members. It is from that experience and perspective that I would consider the Director-General's Report to this Conference. From our debate there was real convergence among participants for the ILO to focus on a core mandate in the world of work. It is only then that the ILO can ensure effectiveness to its constituents, but also to others within the context of globalization as well as United Nations reform. As a pilot country in the United Nations reform process, we are convinced that we need a strong, focused ILO, one that can clearly articulate what it can do to strengthen tripartism, give recognition to the role of key national actors and contribute at country level. Until we have that focus restored, and until the ILO's capacity is rebuilt with regard to its knowledge, skills base and analytical capacity, as has been mentioned by the Director-General himself, I would caution against

looking to shift its work into other areas, important though those areas may be. That is not to say that the ILO should not move forward. It certainly should, as the dynamics of globalization mean that change should be accepted as a constant factor.

An example of how the ILO can be effective comes from my own country. Recently we experienced an important buyer withdrawal from the Sialkot region of Pakistan, an area where sports goods, especially hand-sewn footballs, are produced and where large numbers of small manufacturers depend on export markets for their well-being. Through ILO engagement with us, our worker colleagues and others have been able to respond effectively to the concerns behind buyer withdrawal and they have recently agreed to re-engage and buy from Sialkot. ILO assistance was instrumental in achieving that result, and I would like to express my thanks to Mr Kari Tapiola and his team as well as the ILO Islamabad Office for their practical help in realizing this most positive outcome.

The ILO, through consultations with the tripartite partners, has finalized a plan of action to train employers and workers in the Sialkot region in the application and observance of relevant national labour laws in order to satisfy their buyers. I wish to express our satisfaction with the continued cooperation of the ILO Islamabad Office with the Employers' Federation of Pakistan in the realization of our Decent Work Country Programmes. I wish to thank the ILO Director for his support.

We have noted with satisfaction that the Report recognizes the role of business, albeit cautiously. What is now needed is for the Governing Body to ensure that this realization is reflected in programmes and resources within the employment sector. The ILO is focusing more and more on the experiences and roles of multinational enterprises, thus ignoring the overwhelming majority of small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources and which face continued challenges as to their sustainability. This is a group that needs the help and assistance of the ILO. It is at this level of economic activity where job creation and entrepreneurship need to be facilitated by an appropriate regulatory environment supportive of business.

The Director-General has also discussed the widening gaps in the distribution of income and wealth in many countries and the fact that labour income in 16 developing countries fell on average from 68 per cent to 62 per cent as a share of national wealth. These are alarming figures. In this context, the report *World Trade 2006, Prospects for 2007*, released by the WTO in April of this year, warns us of the risks that lie ahead in 2007 following the strong trade figures of 2006. It is expected that global merchandise trade could slow down to 6 per cent compared to 8 per cent in 2006. That is a very sharp reduction of 2 per cent, and all should not go well for 2007.

While I can understand the rich contents of the Director-General's Report, it would be my strong recommendation that the Governing Body consider its elements. It can then decide strategically whether the ILO should involve itself and, if so, how, remembering always that the ILO is there first and foremost to respond to the needs of its constituents, to help them to be as effective as possible at the national level and to respond to their needs for technical cooperation that actually helps people. That it what should guide the ILO now and in the future.

Mr. SLADOWSKI (*Employer, Poland*)

It is a great honour for me to represent Polish employers during this 96th Session of the International Labour Conference. Participating in the Conference is both an honour and a cause of great satisfaction, as every year, it serves as a source of inspiration and numerous initiatives. It is evident how, after a few years of operation, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is yielding more and more impressive effects. This was noted in the Global Report on *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, which provides a very detailed description of many examples of discrimination and inequalities in the contemporary labour world and outlines the successes of programmes and efforts aimed at altering the attitudes of societies and authorities and at changing statutory regulations.

A variety of documents show how the ILO catchphrase of "decent work" is being transformed into real actions, including the Report by the Director-General. It highlights the role and significance of the need for joint efforts at the local and global levels to promote sustainable living conditions, the sustainable functioning of enterprises and a sustainable environment.

In this spirit, our Conference has launched a Report devoted to the promotion of sustainable enterprises, something which is in the centre of focus for Polish employers.

The Report, by opening up for discussion the notion of "sustainable enterprises", points to the huge opportunities inherent in this concept. In this regard, I would like to stress that placing emphasis on recognizing the role played by private businesses in creating jobs, wealth and development opportunities for individuals and entire societies serves as a valuable approach to identifying additional links between legal, fiscal, economic, social and environmental aspects and human capital development, and lays the groundwork for a stronger exchange of information and good practices.

The Report also significantly outlines the possibilities of redefining the policy frameworks for both the business and the public sectors oriented towards the management of changes, such as takeovers, bankruptcies, disclosures and restructuring processes, which usually run counter sustainability.

And finally, there are the crucial parts of the Report on the comprehensive analysis of conditions which can ensure the competitiveness of economies, regions and companies – something so perfectly shown in the Report in the case study of Germany and the Bavarian region (pages 65–66).

On the other hand, discussions on sustainable enterprises are already under way and have revealed the risks which are linked to question of sustainable enterprises. Let me list some examples: first of all, reducing the whole issue to the new obligations of enterprises oriented towards social responsibilities provides a highly unbalanced, not to say distorted, view of the entire concept of sustainable enterprise; second, the meaning of these concepts should not be limited to corporate social responsibility activities which are, we must emphasize, only of a voluntary nature and should remain as such; and third, the strong orientation among our partners from the trade unions to take action on behalf of sustainable enterprise can provide an appropriate opportunity to fight against business.

On behalf of the Polish Employers' group, I want to put the question: "Are we, in Poland, on the right track towards creating a climate for this kind of discussion and solving problems connected with a balanced model of sustainable enterprise?" This is hard to judge, for many reasons. First, because of the lack of earnest social dialogue among the partners. I am afraid that the Government's attitude to the issues presented by social dialogue challenges is reminiscent of a game. At this stage, although the issue is in the full public limelight, there is no real debate in a spirit of cooperation to solve the difficulties.

Secondly, the preference of the Government and, from time to time, trade unions for oversimplified generalizations means that limited-scale phenomena of rather secondary importance are seen as the generally prevailing picture throughout the country, an approach which does not lend itself to creating an atmosphere conducive to problem solving.

Thirdly, there is a lack of understanding of many of the modern challenges which we must face, especially in the long-term, which require all the social partners to work together.

In conclusion, I hope, of course, that using the good examples and the strong principles of the tripartite traditions and the ILO's achievements, we will find a way to increase the effectiveness of social dialogue in Poland through practical and important efforts. And we are ready to offer our substantive contribution to the new subjects discussed at the ILO level.

Mr. ZUKHOROV (*Government, Tajikistan*)

Tajikistan, during the period of its membership of the ILO, has consistently subscribed to the ILO's guiding ideas and principles. We, in the Tajik delegation, support the main provisions of the Director-General's Report, with regard to decent employment, equal rights at work and developing and strengthening local potential. All of the issues examined at the present session of the International Labour Conference are extremely important for the development of the decent work programme and will be welcomed everywhere, including in Tajikistan.

Discussion of the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is especially timely for countries with economies in transition. This issue is a kind of indicator, allowing us to judge the essence of reforms under way, along with their influence on social and labour relations.

Despite the fact that the Labour Code of Tajikistan provides for administrative, and in some cases criminal, liability for any forms of discrimination at work, nevertheless, the fact remains that in our country a gender imbalance exists, both in employment and in wages. The same problem exists in employment and wages for young people, disabled people and certain other categories.

The overriding priority of the Government of Tajikistan remains decreasing the poverty level in our country. I should like to note that comparatively rapid economic growth has led to a decrease in the poverty level from 83 per cent in 1999 to 57 per cent in 2004. In the same period, the level of extreme poverty in our country decreased from 36 per cent to 18 per cent.

The Government provides for an annual increase in pensions and wages for workers in public institu-

tions. In the last five years alone, the average salary has increased more than fivefold and pensions have increased sevenfold. Annual increases in the minimum levels of salaries and pensions, of stipends and other benefits, and of financial compensation for gas and electricity costs, have all contributed to real improvements in the standard of living of our population. At the same time, the income of most of the population remains lower than their actual needs.

The principal reasons for poverty in Tajikistan are low levels of salaries and employment. Over the past 15 years, the population of Tajikistan has increased by more than 25 per cent while the working-age population has increased by more than 50 per cent. However, in the same period, the employment rate rose by only 7 per cent, so the increase in the employment level is much lower than the growth in the working-age population.

Existing tension on the labour market in Tajikistan has led, in particular, to a massive wave of internal labour migration, which on the one hand has attenuated the labour market situation but on the other has given rise to new problems related to the social protection of labour migrants.

In Tajikistan we are successfully carrying out legislative and administrative reforms. Our guiding principles are: ensuring the right to decent work and social protection; implementing a decent work policy and the regulation of the labour market; formulating measures to regulate labour migration, aimed at reducing illegal migration and preventing its negative consequences; ensuring freedom of association and the development of social partnership; and ensuring occupational safety and health.

I would like to note that, in reaching these achievements, the ILO has played a key role. ILO assistance in Tajikistan has enabled us to create a mechanism for social partnership and develop tripartite policies. What is more, recently in Tajikistan special attention has been devoted to eradicating the worst forms of child labour, a goal aided by the ILO's programme on capacity building in Central Asian countries to combat the worst forms of child labour. We are in favour of continued cooperation with and development of this programme and programmes to fight other forms of discrimination at work.

Testimony to this is the fact that, just today, we signed a programme for cooperation between the tripartite partners of Tajikistan and the ILO on decent work. It is our hope that this programme will help us to implement more effectively the principles of social justice, democracy and social dialogue, as well as serving to increase peace and stability.

In conclusion, let me note that, considering the increasing international authority of the Republic of Tajikistan in recent years, we expect there to be an appropriate ILO presence in our country. This would certainly be aided by the opening of an ILO office in Tajikistan. The ILO, in our view, is a very important and necessary Organization in our modern world, and Tajikistan wishes the greatest of success to its future fruitful work.

M. NGORWANUBUSA (*gouvernement, Burundi*)

Il me plaît de souligner que mon pays, le Burundi, au demeurant membre du Conseil d'administration du BIT, est très attaché, tant à travers les actions normatives que dans ses attitudes, ses comportements et ses pratiques, à l'élimination de la dis-

crimination sous toutes ses formes et manifestations dans l'emploi et la profession.

Il ne saurait d'ailleurs en être autrement. Depuis les années de l'immédiat après-indépendance, et par la suite et plus singulièrement d'octobre 1993 à 2005, le Burundi a connu des crises multiformes graves, dont une des causes est assurément la re-ventilation de l'égalité au travail et de la juste répartition des postes de responsabilité.

Des négociations franches et laborieuses ont amené les partenaires politiques et sociaux à admettre l'existence de groupes peu ou prou représentés dans l'appareil politique de l'Etat et dans le monde du travail avec comme secteurs cibles l'armée, la sécurité, la magistrature et le circuit économique.

Des mesures correctives ont été initiées, particulièrement avec l'année 2005, qui correspond avec la mise en place des institutions démocratiquement élues.

La Constitution, qui fait siens les principes fondamentaux des droits de l'homme, et en particulier du droit au travail, pose comme inaliénable le droit d'accès aux fonctions civiles et militaires à toutes les composantes de la société burundaise en instituant le principe du pouvoir partagé dans les institutions politiques jusqu'au niveau des communes.

La participation à l'égalité de chances, à la gestion de la chose publique entre les deux principales communautés est affirmée sans ambages, tandis que la communauté très minoritaire des Batwa est représentée de manière volontariste à l'Assemblée nationale et au Sénat par des parlementaires coopérants.

La représentation des femmes, avec un minimum de 30 pour cent dans les institutions politiques, est déjà une réalité au sein du gouvernement qui compte sept femmes sur 20 ministres.

La composition des bureaux de l'Assemblée nationale et du Sénat ne se conçoit pas non plus sans la composante féminine.

La loi portant statut général des fonctionnaires est explicite quant à sa ferme volonté d'éradiquer toutes formes de discrimination, puisqu'elle fustige toute tendance à la discrimination liée à l'ethnie, au sexe, à la religion, à l'état sérologique réel ou supposé, de même qu'elle prend des dispositions particulières en faveur de certaines catégories défavorisées, comme les handicapés.

Une commission de recrutement dotée de pouvoirs étendus et comportant des membres de divers horizons veille à l'équité dans l'accès aux emplois publics sur la base de concours.

Afin d'éviter la politisation de l'administration, mon pays le Burundi s'est doté d'une réglementation qui distingue les postes politiques et les postes techniques, toujours dans l'esprit de promouvoir la pérennité de l'emploi lié aux compétences et aux performances.

Le Code du travail est un instrument de référence pour combattre la discrimination envers les travailleurs migrants, surtout à une époque où le Burundi s'ouvre résolument à de plus grands ensembles régionaux et qu'il crée les conditions optimales pour attirer les investisseurs pour son développement.

Le cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté, qui a réuni au mois de mai dernier les partenaires au développement, a inscrit en bonne place la promotion des travaux à haute intensité de main-d'œuvre (Himo) afin de faire accéder à l'emploi et aux revenus des catégories entières de personnes qui en étaient dépourvues, comme les jeunes non sco-

larisés, les démobilisés et autres catégories de sinistrés et groupes vulnérables, toujours en vue de rendre effectif le mot d'ordre de travail décent pour tous, mot d'ordre qui, du reste, est inscrit en lettres d'or dans le programme par pays de promotion du travail décent au Burundi.

Je sais gré au Directeur général et à ses collaborateurs pour l'appui constant qu'ils ne cessent d'apporter au gouvernement du Burundi et aux partenaires sociaux dans tous les domaines de leurs préoccupations, qu'il s'agisse des normes, du dialogue social, de la protection sociale, de l'emploi et du perfectionnement professionnel.

C'est par ces mots de remerciement et en réitérant l'engagement ferme du Burundi à faire aboutir les objectifs du BIT que je termine mon propos.

Mr. ZARB (*Worker, Malta*)

In his Report for this year, the Director-General touches elaborately on the topic of equality at work. This subject is indeed an important one as equality is fairness or, as one might say, equality depends on fairness.

I therefore want to congratulate the Director-General for presenting such a detailed document which I am convinced has shed more light on the levels of equality at work that have been achieved in this globalized world, and also for showing the way forward to reducing discrimination as much as possible in the workplace, notwithstanding the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead.

At a time when we are witnessing the widening of social and economic disparities, we are seeing also, thanks to the trade unions, more workers rising to combat injustices and discrimination at their place of work. Luckily, workers are more than ever before increasing their knowledge and realizing that power and profit can no longer take preference over their working rights.

In my country, particularly in the last few years, we have seen a sharp rise in workplace exploitation, so much so that today many part-time workers are working under miserable conditions, while those in full-time employment are being forced to accept a reduction in the conditions that they have managed to achieve, not without sacrifice, over the years.

As regards female employment, the General Workers' Union (GWU) has long been calling for the necessary steps to be taken and implemented so as to make the labour market more accessible to enable the largest possible number of women to enter into full-time employment. We have been insisting on such measures as we know from statistics that more women are opting for part-time or homework as a result of their inability to reconcile the work-family balance.

One other issue I would like to touch upon is that of freedom of collective bargaining in my country. This leads me to call your attention to the fact that my country's Government is still interfering in the process of collective bargaining and obstructing the freedom of collective negotiations to such an extent that it is still ignoring, and thus violating, the decision of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.

I refer to Case No. 2447, with respect to which a year ago the Committee on Freedom of Association upheld the GWU's complaint and requested the Maltese Government to amend the National and Public Holidays Act so as to ensure that this provision does not render null or void any provisions in

the existing collective agreements and also not to preclude voluntary negotiations in the future.

In spite of the ILO's decision, the situation has remained unchanged and our collective bargaining process will remain hindered as long as the Maltese Government continues to refuse to alter its decision and bring back the law to where it was in 2004.

Therefore we are once again calling upon the International Labour Organization to further press the Maltese Government to adhere to the decision taken by the Committee on Freedom of Association and to let free collective bargaining take its course.

Ms. DEFARES (*Government, Suriname*)

Let me first congratulate the President and Vice-President on their election to guide this Conference. It is for me really a great honour to address this august assembly today on behalf of the Minister and make use of the opportunity to reflect on labour and socio-economic policies and the challenges they present.

We greatly appreciate the excellent Report from the Director-General, *Decent work for sustainable development*. To achieve decent work in a globalizing world, we have to commit ourselves to making strong alliances to fight social injustice and poverty.

The Government of Suriname recognizes the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO as an important instrument in accomplishing full and productive employment and decent work for all. The decent work concept is truly a powerful and effective instrument for politicians and policy-makers as it provides ingredients for equitable growth, productive employment and a competitive market economy. Moreover, it fully promotes the integration of sustainable economic, social and environmental development, in which social dialogue and tripartism are crucial.

Climate change is an area of great concern. Some economic sectors and some populations, such as ours, are vulnerable to sea-level rises. On the national level, efforts are being made to tackle and anticipate climate change impacts; therefore, the Surinamese Government welcomes the ILO's approach on low carbon economies and more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Worth mentioning in this context is the fact that, in 2002, the Government of Suriname added two policy areas to the labour portfolio, namely, technological development and the environment, in order to facilitate a working environment conducive to social and environmental protection. The aim was to create, preserve and restore employability in all phases of working life and to encourage innovation and knowledge for the sustainable development of the environment.

While jobs should become greener, they also should be productive and able to compete – as stated in the Director-General's Report. Suriname is in the process of transforming existing concepts of productivity through newly adapted strategies in order to make quantum leaps. The realization of these concepts is of great importance to our society. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Ministry created the Foundation for Productive Work Units, with the aim of promoting enterprise development and productivity. Particular focus is placed on youth and women in order to enable equal access to entrepreneurship opportunities and training services.

Productivity in Suriname has risen in the mining, construction and tourism sectors; hence, the demand for skilled workers is increasing. The Ministry of

Labour is therefore enhancing its efforts to deliver skilled workers. To improve the adequate matching of labour supply to labour demand, the Ministry is promoting skills development through its vocational training centre. A skills development system is being developed in this regard on a tripartite basis. Simultaneously, the Government is also in the process of adapting its certification system for technical and vocational education and training to meet regional standards.

In conjunction with the growing economy in Suriname, active labour institutions are now being strengthened for the sustainable development of employment, productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

The adaptation of labour laws to changing patterns in the world of work is an integral and essential part of the national socio-economic policy of my country. Based on ILO instruments and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) model laws, the Ministry of Labour will utilize its own expertise to modernize labour legislation. The ultimate goal is to establish and maintain a flexible mechanism to continuously adapt rules in order to be able to implement the concept of decent work and achieve other standardization and integration objectives. The protection of vulnerable groups and an adequate minimum wage system are considered high-priority issues for our Government.

In an attempt to gain a complete overview of the labour market, the Ministry of Labour is executing a survey of the informal sector in cooperation with the General Bureau for Statistics. Relatively recently, integrated work has begun within the Ministries of Finance, Social Affairs, Public Health and Labour to introduce a social security scheme with the emphasis on pensions and general sickness insurance. The Ministry of Labour has a central role and, as part of this role, will tackle the issues of paid maternity leave, social protection and pensions in the private sector separately.

The Ministry of Labour has developed an increased awareness of workers and employers with regard to international labour standards and their relationship to national labour laws. In the years since the 95th Session of the ILC, constant reference has been made by employers' and workers' organizations to international labour standards. The Suriname Labour College recently organized a successful national tripartite seminar to enhance the understanding of the functioning and role of ILO Conventions and Recommendations in general and those related to freedom of association in particular.

Given the broad scope and impact of decent work, the Surinamese Government warmly applauds the dialogue of the ILO with other international agencies.

In conclusion, we underscore once again the importance of the Decent Work Agenda for sustainable development and welcome the many efforts by and support from the ILO in this respect. We also would like to thank the ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean in Trinidad for its support and assistance in the many areas of our work and concerns. Therefore, I am very convinced of the fruitful outcome of this Conference.

M. TRENCHÉV (*travailleur, Bulgarie*)

Monsieur le Président, je suis convaincu que cette 96^e session de la Conférence internationale du Travail donnera lieu à un fructueux débat concernant

toutes les questions de l'agenda, et plus particulièrement celles soulignées dans le rapport global présenté par le Directeur général consacré à l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination dans le domaine de l'emploi et de la profession visées dans la Déclaration relative aux principes et droits fondamentaux au travail et son suivi.

Nous sommes convaincus qu'à cette Conférence tripartite les participants sauront, avec une grande efficacité et un grand sérieux, contribuer au débat concernant le renforcement des capacités de l'OIT et la promotion des entreprises durables.

Dans ce cadre, je suis obligé de souligner que, malgré les résultats positifs concrétisés il y a quatre ans par l'adoption d'une loi contre la discrimination et la création d'un organisme gouvernemental pour sa mise en œuvre, bien que l'année présente ait été déclarée année européenne de l'égalité des chances, l'application des lois antidiscriminatoires au travail se heurte encore à de nombreuses difficultés en Bulgarie.

En premier lieu, je voudrais attirer votre attention sur le travail insuffisant des institutions et organismes bulgares compétents, ainsi que sur le manque de respect des employeurs bulgares à l'égard des droits des handicapés. Il faut en effet ne pas oublier que ces derniers peuvent largement contribuer à l'augmentation de l'emploi, et que leur marginalisation du marché du travail, l'absence de politiques assez flexibles et efficaces pour assurer leur intégration professionnelle et sociale représentent un danger réel pour la cohésion sociale.

Une grande inquiétude dans notre pays est aussi provoquée par les cas d'attitudes négatives et discriminatoires, parfois par une exploitation cruelle des handicapés, plus particulièrement dans les entreprises spécialisées où leurs droits d'association et de travail sont bafoués en raison de leur état physique par des employeurs peu scrupuleux.

En second lieu, je suis obligé d'attirer votre attention sur les inégalités existant entre hommes et femmes dans le domaine du travail notamment en matière d'embauche, de rémunération et de conditions de travail.

Il arrive fréquemment que des employeurs bulgares, essentiellement soucieux de rentabilité, ne respectent pas les droits des femmes au travail, notamment ceux liés à la protection de la maternité (garde des enfants, retour au travail, etc.).

Ce phénomène est très marquant, surtout dans le secteur informel de l'économie. Plusieurs enquêtes ont permis de constater de manière irréfutable que certaines jeunes femmes repoussent la décision d'avoir des enfants car elles ont peur de perdre leur emploi ou de ne pas retrouver les mêmes conditions de travail après leur retour en entreprise.

En troisième lieu, en Bulgarie, il existe un sérieux problème avec les travailleurs âgés qui sont à la veille de leur retraite. D'un côté, certains estiment que la rémunération des travailleurs âgés constitue une discrimination vis-à-vis des jeunes en raison de la prime d'ancienneté qui s'ajoute à leur salaire de base.

D'autre part, les indemnités prévues par la loi et dans le cadre des négociations collectives lors du passage à la retraite poussent les employeurs à refuser d'embaucher des salariés âgés au prétexte qu'ils coûtent cher à l'entreprise.

Nous sommes particulièrement satisfaits de cette partie du rapport global du Directeur général qui insiste sur les formes existantes de discrimination

au travail touchant les salariés âgés, et nous saluons les orientations principales proposées pour surmonter ce problème.

En dernier lieu, je dois souligner que certains anciens mécanismes de régulation administrative concernant la rémunération du travail créent des conditions de traitement inégales entre le secteur privé et le secteur public.

L'État se permet de réguler et d'encadrer strictement les salaires dans le secteur public par des critères et indicateurs qui touchent directement le droit à la négociation collective, y compris jusqu'à une date récente par la suppression des conventions collectives de branche, avec comme argument la stabilité macroéconomique et financière du pays.

De telles réglementations sont imposées malgré l'opinion négative et unanime des représentants des syndicats et des employeurs qui prêchent pour l'élimination de telles formes de régulation de salaire.

En conclusion, je tiens à vous assurer que les syndicats bulgares tiennent en priorité à assurer à la population bulgare un travail et une existence digne. Nous allons continuer à mener notre lutte pour l'adoption des normes internationales concernant les droits des salariés, tout en poursuivant nos efforts en vue de rendre notre pays digne de l'Union européenne.

Je souhaite à la Conférence internationale du Travail un plein succès dans ses travaux. La Conférence va sans doute réaffirmer le droit au travail décent des travailleurs et des salariés, condamner catégoriquement toute forme de discrimination relative aux emplois et aux métiers, élaborer les bases d'une meilleure réglementation du travail pour le secteur de la pêche, contribuer au renforcement de la capacité de l'OIT à promouvoir le développement durable des entreprises.

Merci pour votre attention.

Mr. MESKOV (*Minister of Labour and Social Policy, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*)

It is my honour to address this session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to thank the Director-General, Mr. Somavia, for the very comprehensive and important Report he has submitted to the Conference.

The Republic of Macedonia is one of the countries that have ratified all of the fundamental ILO Conventions and is committed to the Decent Work Agenda in line with sustainable development and its three pillars of economic development, social development and environmental protection.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is focusing its national policies on the creation of employment and economic growth. For these reasons, the Government adopted the National Employment Strategy 2006–10 and the National Action Plan for Employment 2006–08.

What is most important is that the social partners are actively involved in the preparation of these documents, because the Government acknowledges that social partnerships are essential for the success of its economic and social policies.

Furthermore, the Strategy and the Action Plan are adopted by the Economic and Social Council, which is the highest form of tripartite social dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia.

Recognizing the importance of employment creation, especially for young people, is the best way to fight poverty, and the Republic of Macedonia is

determined to create all necessary conditions to attract investment in order to create better jobs.

The Government has already reduced the tax rates to among the lowest levels in the world, thus creating excellent business conditions for possible investors.

At the same time, we are creating more labour legislation, which is necessary in the globalized world. We are working on labour legislation which is flexible and at the same time provides full respect for workers' rights.

Of course, all these measures can only be implemented through social partnerships and in full respect of the opinions of both the employers and the workers. We all have the common goal of achieving sustainable development. Globalization offers us both the challenge and the opportunity to make this world a better place.

Mr. EASTMOND (*Minister of Labour and Civil Service, Barbados*)

My delegation and I are pleased to note that this year's Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, focuses on tackling the challenges associated with equality in the workplace. These challenges are many ranging from common forms of discrimination, such as those related to gender, race, religion, disability and age, and the newly emerging forms such as genetic discrimination and discrimination based on lifestyles. It is also encouraging that the Director-General's Report highlights the need for sustainable development, that is, balancing the needs of people with the environment to ensure that generations following will have a preserved and healthy environment in which to live and work.

It is heartening to note that the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) High-level Segment embraced the ILO's goal of decent work for all in July of 2006. Moreover, the Director-General in his Report has placed squarely on the ILO's agenda the importance of sustainable development. These factors will have several positive impacts on the world of work and propel the ILO towards its goal of decent and productive employment for all. Further, I believe, that the time is right for the ILO to be given the opportunity to exert greater influence on policy and programming in regional and international institutions.

Let me state at this point that the promotion of equality at work has the potential, not only to contribute towards the ILO's goal of decent work for all, but to move us closer to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.

Let me also state that the negative impact which inequality and discrimination at work has on a society is extremely real and evident. In Barbados, for example, in order to address any inequalities in society, the Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, along with the social partners, is working on labour legislation in the areas of sexual harassment, the employees' right to notice of termination, the right to appeal against unfair dismissal, and safety and health in the workplace. In addition, new ways are being sought in which to ensure that equal opportunities exist for all workers, whether in the formal or informal economy.

Understandably, in order to monitor the effectiveness of policies and programmes, labour market

information systems must function effectively. For example, data relating to wages, gender and educational attainment will assist in identifying and eliminating areas where inequality of pay and promotion may exist on account of gender. In addition, access and use of administrative data may prove useful in addressing discrimination related to migrants, lifestyle and social origin. In making further inroads into the decent work deficit, the ILO must continue to provide technical assistance to developing and less developed countries in the areas of developing, managing and maintaining their labour market information systems. I know that this issue has been highlighted in the Global Report, and it is imperative that support is not merely written, but provided to deal with the development and management of effective labour market information.

I now wish to turn my attention briefly to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the devastating impact it can have and is having on developing States, especially on the small economies of the Caribbean region. In collaboration with the ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work in Barbados, the Ministry of Labour has assisted other ministries and agencies in dealing with the stigma and discrimination related to this pandemic. To this end, it has been instrumental in the training of a number of persons in behaviour change communication strategies, policy development and implementation, and peer group education. Literature has also been distributed in the communities and it is hoped that these strategies will go a long way in helping to arrest this pandemic. I am aware that the ILO Programme in Barbados is coming to an end, and I urge the Director-General to continue providing assistance until the Programme becomes sustainable.

In closing, I wish to commend the ILO on its quest to ensure that it is a dynamic Organization, constantly adapting to the global changes to meet the evolving needs of its stakeholders. It should be proud of its work, which I assure you, is supported by the Government of Barbados and, indeed, the rest of the Caribbean.

Mr. SYED MOHAMUD (*Worker, Malaysia*)

The Decent Work Agenda has been touted as the response of the workers towards the many ills of globalization where there is simply too much evidence suggesting that the majority of the world population has not had an increase of its standard of living in tandem with economic growth rate.

In this time and age, we are still dealing with issues concerning abject poverty, a widening wealth gap, and major medical and environmental concerns. Needless to say, it is the poorer segment of society that bears the greater cost of this.

Players in the international community have signed trade accords, and many other global, regional and multilateral agreements, which mostly support the interest of trade and the protection of those who control capital. The one regret we must all have is that we have done virtually nothing to protect those who really need protection – the poor, marginalized, oppressed and exploited. There are vast amounts of literature which extol the virtues of successful corporations, highlighting the managerial precepts that have made them so successful.

What is the measure of success? I must very humbly ask. Could we consider pressuring people to work longer hours for less pay, sacrificing their family life and working to the detriment of the in-

terests of a larger society, something which should be lauded and emulated?

Pursuing the Decent Work Agenda is a responsibility and duty of anyone, and any institution which has genuine interest of the world population in mind. There is simply no need to compromise or for any negotiation to accede to the demand that people be treated with dignity and respect.

I am sure that everyone here would agree that capital should be working to serve the interests of people and not for people to enslave themselves for capital.

The many rights that have been fought for and we now take for granted are slowly but surely being eroded away. I would use, as one example, the issue of working hours. Many countries have in place as part of the employment legislation that workers should not be subjected to more than eight hours of work per day. What we see today is pressure being inflicted on the government to rely on this, to allow for capital to subject workers to longer working hours.

One may try to argue that such employees have choice. Do employees really have a choice? In reality, it is obvious that employees do not have a choice if they are faced with the prospect of losing their jobs if they do not agree to such exploitative practices. These days the threat of moving to a lower level cost country with a scant regard for the right of workers is always there.

We live in a world where we fight terrorism on one hand even where there is no evidence that terrorist activities have taken place in some instances. When, on the other hand, we turn a blind eye to the atrocities which are committed to children who are forced to work and to other forms of forced work through human trafficking and through continued enslavement and exploitation of the voiceless, the under privileged and the oppressed. The international community has all but ignored the violations being committed against the people and workers of Burma/Myanmar, something which there can be little excuse for. A firm commitment and focus by the international community could address this issue as well as other injustices that exist in the world. The Decent Work Agenda and trade are not mutually exclusive and can operate side by side. I would urge all of you to ensure that this session amounts to more than a place where rhetoric is announced but to work to effectively implement the Decent Work Agenda.

Mr. DAMDIN (*Minister for Social Welfare and Labour, Mongolia*)

On behalf of the Government of Mongolia and in my own name, I would like to wish every success for the activities of the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Although Mongolia confronted a number of challenges and obstacles in its transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, in its efforts to reform social relations in the 1990s, it was able to successfully overcome these challenges and obstacles and make progress towards economic stability. In recent years our economy has grown steadily, at an average rate of 6 to 10.7 per cent, the inflation rate has decreased, and foreign trade and the overall state budget balance have recorded surpluses.

Some issues related to the Millennium Development Goals remain to be resolved, as GDP per cap-

ita continues to be low. Unemployment and poverty rates remain high. Mongolia has therefore developed and started to implement specific development policies and programmes which take into account both external and internal factors as well as its commitments made before the international community with regard to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Thus an economic growth support and poverty reduction strategy has been developed and approved. Furthermore, the national development strategy has been elaborated as a long- and medium-term comprehensive policy document for Mongolia. In accordance with the Mongolian decent work action plan for 2005–08 adopted by the Government, the country programme for decent work has been developed in cooperation with the ILO in order to provide technical and methodological support in implementing the action plan. The Government of Mongolia pays great attention to the promotion of tripartism and social dialogue and to ensuring public participation in the implementation of this programme, which aims at reducing unemployment and poverty and promoting decent work through efficient use of support and technical assistance from foreign countries, the ILO and other international organizations along with domestic resources.

Enactment of state legislation on the informal sector by the Mongolian Parliament creates an enabling environment for making concrete progress to ensure fundamental human rights at work, to create jobs and adapt various forms of employment, to advance the social dialogue mechanism and to improve social protection in Mongolia.

The Government of Mongolia has ratified the basic ILO Conventions in order to ensure fundamental principles and rights at work within the framework of the international normative system. It has accepted the amendment to the ILO Constitution which was adopted at the 85th Session of the ILC in 1997 and has submitted it to the Parliament of Mongolia for ratification. With the ratification of ILO Conventions Nos 29 and 105 on forced labour in 2005, Mongolia joined the list of countries that have accepted and ratified all eight core Conventions. Furthermore, preparations are under way to ratify other ILO Conventions, such as Convention No. 160 on labour statistics, Convention No. 187 on the promotional framework for occupational safety and health and Convention No. 102 on social security.

The ratification of the social security Convention will promote the reform of social welfare and insurance schemes in Mongolia and will provide an essential framework for the establishment of a development-oriented social security system. The improvement in national legislation so as to raise it to the level of international standards is one of the core conditions for promoting decent work. Therefore, as a member State, the Government of Mongolia pays particular attention to further improving the legal framework for the implementation of ratified and soon-to-be-ratified Conventions. In cooperation with the ILO, amendments to the law on the labour force and on the law on occupational safety and health are being drafted in accordance with international labour principles. I would like to express our appreciation to the ILO for its technical assistance in drafting the abovementioned legislation.

The IPEC programme, encouraging productive and decent work for youth, promoting the employ-

ability and employment of people with disabilities through effective legislation and social dialogue, is now being successfully implemented in Mongolia. The conclusion of the first two phases of the IPEC programme has contributed significantly to the implementation of public policy on children's issues, so as to enhance public awareness of child labour and to accelerate national incentives aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour. There is an apparent need to broaden the scope and efficiency of our cooperation in the future, especially since the Government of Mongolia has proclaimed 2007 as the year of great endeavours and a year of creation of new jobs. This will serve as a concrete step towards implementing the Decent Work Agenda, with strengthened collaboration among governmental and non-governmental organizations in the private sector.

In conclusion, within the framework of our national development strategy, a wide range of policies – such as implementing the country action plan for decent work, facilitating employment, improving labour statistics, strengthening social dialogue and reforming the social security system – will be systematically undertaken. Cooperation among member States, technical assistance and support from the ILO will certainly play a very important role in this effort.

Ms. PILLAI (*Government, India*)

I compliment the Report of the Director-General for advancing the Decent Work Agenda and tripartism. Especially relevant are the ILO's efforts towards achieving synergy for sustainable development. Promoting and protecting the interests of the workforce remain the cornerstone of the ILO's policies and principles. Hence, the ILO has garnered widespread support for highlighting the social dimensions of globalization.

Globalization has led to a process of increasing economic interdependence between all countries in the developed and developing world. Over a period of time, it has been observed that globalization has had a mixed impact. We therefore have to make a concerted effort to maximize the benefits of globalization and minimize its negative outcomes. This can be done if, as part of the global efforts to promote decent work, we forge closer links with the efforts of the ILO to give an impetus to an inclusive growth strategy and adopt special measures for those persons who would normally be excluded.

At the same time, without growth we cannot generate the resources needed for investment in the social and physical infrastructure, which is why India's current growth strategy and its development plan promote faster and more inclusive growth.

India has a well-established tradition of tripartism and of consulting stakeholders on all important policy matters. India also abides by its decision to work with the international community in the common effort to promote economic and social development and to achieve the goal of generating full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Here, I would just like to raise a couple of issues. The objective of promoting social transition to "green jobs" requires careful thought. While the objective itself is laudable, because it aims at promoting intergenerational equity by protecting the environment, in practice it may be used as a means of erecting non-trade barriers against developing countries. The creation of green jobs is an essential

adjunct to sustainable development. The interpretation of the term "green job" is itself varied. While, in the organized sector, it is easy to identify pro-environment measures, the same may not hold true for the unorganized sector. Further, developing countries cannot be expected to leapfrog to green technologies without adequate technical and financial support. We thus have to guard against the tendency to use carbon credits as a tool. Protection of the environment is a significant reference point nonetheless for all development programmes as there are major economic, social and human costs involved. From this perspective, we support the priority issues outlined in the Director-General's Report on green jobs, and the transition initiative, with its focus on social protection, skill training and other measures to facilitate a fair transition.

The issue of wage inequalities is relevant to the goal of profit maximization. While income equity remains an important policy objective in India, some degree of inequality in the present developmental context is inevitable. To redress this issue in India, the Minimum Wages Act 1948, updates the floor level of wages for a large segment of our workforce.

Simultaneously, efforts are being made to increase significantly skill training for the workforce to enhance their bargaining capability. Coupled with the protection given by the State, we expect that wage disparities can be absorbed by greater employment intensity. India's strength lies in labour-intensive modes of production and we have already adopted the ILO core labour standards and have ratified Conventions which are of relevance to us. However, we do not agree with the use of labour standards and carbon accreditation as non-tariff barriers against countries.

On the issue of social justice, we need to consider that priorities will always encounter resource constraints; thus distributing opportunities for access to jobs and decent work would therefore be a better goal. A better labour market assessment across the country presupposes common definitions of crucial concepts such as unemployment and wages. Different definitions often lead to different end results for the same processes, thus making the assimilation of varying labour standards into a single benchmark so much more difficult. A major initiative on the subject across nations would be opportune. It is also necessary to integrate rural and urban development based on the population dynamics in each country.

The sustainability of the reform process across nations presupposes that these have to become home-grown, intrinsic and self-propelled. In the endeavour to realize sustainable development, it is crucial that international agencies cooperate with each other in their specialized areas. We therefore warmly compliment the ILO's initiative to create an enabling environment for this kind of strategy.

Mr. QARQEEN (*Government, Afghanistan*)

First of all allow me to convey my congratulations on the election of Your Excellency as the President of the 96th International Labour Conference. I am sure Your Excellency's guidance will play an important and effective role in reaching the goals for the Conference. I would like to take the opportunity to extend the full support of the Afghan delegation for the agreements and conclusions of this Conference.

The Global Report issued in the context of follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is focused on the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. I am pleased to announce that our country has ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and has taken specific steps towards their implementation.

The new Labour Code, which has been approved by the Government, stipulates and secures equal rights and supports the rights of workers. Paragraph 1 of Article 8 of the Labour Code provides for equal pay for equal work for workers in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Moreover, the new Labour Code provides that there should be no discrimination in recruitment, salaries and allowances, occupation, profession, right to education and social protection. Also, the Code stipulates that there should be no discrimination in payment of wages.

In compliance with the ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, in consultation with social organizations and partners, has drafted a national employment strategy for people with disabilities, which will be approved in the near future.

Our country is reviewing the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983, (No. 159), to take necessary steps towards ratification

To improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities, which is one of the goals in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, an employment committee, composed of national and international organizations, has recently been set up under the supervision of the Ministry.

As far as women's employment is concerned, steps have already been taken, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Despite the fact that we attach special importance to this issue, current problems have been a major obstacle for taking sufficient steps in this regard. Nonetheless, the implementation of the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan, which will be signed by the President in the near future, will resolve the issue.

We are working on a programme on employment for security which contain better methods for seeking and finding employment. Policy formulation and the strategy of this programme and its incorporation in the development plans of the country, to which we have devoted a great deal of attention, are key issues.

It is worth mentioning that, taking into account the national employment problem, and in line with government policy on reduction of unemployment and social support, it was deemed necessary to equip human resources with employment skills for the national economy and integrate them into the labour market.

In accordance with the instructions of the President of our country, the National Skills Development Programme was included in the priority programmes of the Government and is operating under the leadership of the Ministry. In order to provide better services for employment, employment service centres with state-of-the-art equipment have been established in the country within the boundaries of the limited means available.

The Government of Afghanistan has undertaken efforts to provide every facility in compliance with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy for the elimination of poverty and unemployment and providing employment opportunities for workers.

The Government is making efforts to reconstruct and rehabilitate infrastructures as quickly as possible. The Government encourages local and foreign investors to invest in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, and seeks to provide employment opportunities in agriculture and handicrafts.

Providing employment is one of the greatest challenges facing our country. As a consequence of imposed wars and the resultant destruction, the provision of employment opportunities is of critical importance for securing the livelihoods of millions of Afghans.

Taking into account the fact that more than 30 per cent of the Afghan labour force is facing unemployment, job creation, which plays a key role in the construction of Afghanistan, is one of the main components of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

However, due to financial and technical limitations, job creation has not yet reached expected levels in the development plans and policies of the country. We hope that the ILO, other international organizations and friendly countries will provide the necessary facilities and assistance to us in that regard.

The initial work on the drafting of the national employment strategy has begun. I am pleased to announce that based on the recent understanding between the Ministry and the Regional Offices of the ILO in New Delhi and Kabul, we have agreed to put the action plan for the formulation of the national employment strategy at the top of our agenda and initial work on the drafting of the employment strategy has begun. We need the technical assistance of the ILO in this regard. In the past, the ILO has extended such assistance to a large number of countries.

We have made every effort, not only in the areas described above, but we have also taken steps to ensure decent and productive work, and we have developed a significant body of labour related legislation.

It is worth noting that we have initiated discussions with the ILO on the development of a Decent Work Country Programme. I express my support for declaring this decade the Asian decent work decade.

Discussions have been started with the ILO on the development of a Decent Work Country Programme and I am pleased to announce that the Council of Ministers of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has given its approval for the ratification of the ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973, (No. 138).

Mr. JAHROMI (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Today, the plenary sitting is taking place in an environment adversely affected by unfair globalization. Peace, security and human rights as critical to any prospects for fair development are absent from many parts of the world and, particularly, from our neighbourhood.

Out there, there are 280 million children who are still working, and around 250 million unemployed

in Asia alone, some of them are caught up in the horrendous repercussions of the war in our backyard, as well as in Lebanon and other Arab-occupied territories.

The Global Report, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, also reminds us that discrimination and double discrimination, such as that against women of colour, permeates not only the sphere of labour relations, but also that of international relations.

Globalization would truly lead to prosperity for all if all nations were more or less at the same stage of development and could turn to account its benefits equally. Unfortunately, many nations lack the resources, the infrastructure and the capacity to benefit from it now. Even those few among the developing countries who have ventured to bridge their abysmal scientific and technological gap with developed countries, are in certain cases discriminately coerced to relinquish their hard-earned domestic scientific achievements.

We all need to address the challenges of the new millennium including discrimination, inequality, intolerance, unemployment, global warming and the environment, both at national and international levels. We are therefore of the view that our peaceful nuclear energy programmes, and those of other developing countries in pursuance of scientific and economic prosperity, should not be discriminated against and adversarially confronted.

The purpose of the Global Report is to provide a dynamic global picture. This should enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of the action undertaken by the Organization and the challenges we still face.

We are committed to achieving the objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals. Working towards economic growth, improving productivity, creating job opportunities, our Government has adopted a number of strategic initiatives. By mobilizing monumental financial grants and technical resources, it is striving to ensure equitable and sustainable employment opportunities for all.

To curb one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, we have placed employment at the centre of our economic and social policies. Creating a promising environment for growth, we managed to create almost 2 million new job opportunities within the last two years, and are striving to reduce the unemployment rate to more desirable levels within the next three years. Equal remuneration for men and women, elimination of child labour, promotion of social justice and empowerment of the vulnerable and promoting health and safety at the workplace, are being successfully implemented, too. Freedom of association, youth and women's employment, the promotion of Small and medium-sized enterprises, ensuring sustainability of the enterprises are also on the top of our agenda.

In conclusion, the Report of the Director-General, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, as in previous years, describes the grim plight of people in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the occupied Syrian Golan. According to the Report, separation barrier, the pervasive system of permits and checkpoints and the construction of the wall put in place by the occupying power, have virtually paralysed the daily life of Palestinians. We therefore urge the ILO to provide in the regular budget for its projects in occupied Palestine so as to alleviate part of the current plight of the Palestinian people.

Sr. TOMADA (*Ministro de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social, Argentina*)

Esta es la quinta vez que me dirijo a esta Asamblea en la condición de Ministro de Trabajo de la Argentina.

A raíz de ello estuve, releyendo mi primera intervención en la 91.^a reunión de la Conferencia de la OIT de 2003. Se trata de un ejercicio riesgoso sobre la consistencia y coherencia de nuestro discurso y acciones durante la gestión.

Cuatro años después, podría suscribir todas y cada una de las definiciones incluidas en esa declaración. En particular, encontré dos que fueron ejes centrales de nuestra acción, en este tiempo en que nos tocó la responsabilidad de conducir la administración del trabajo y ejecutar la política laboral del Gobierno del Presidente Kirchner.

En primer lugar, destacamos en aquella ocasión nuestra reivindicación del trabajo «como mecanismo básico de inclusión social», enfatizando que ello constituiría «el centro de las políticas públicas» en las que estábamos, y seguiremos, empeñados.

Con legítima emoción puedo decir que estos cuatro años han sido años de crecimiento ininterrumpido del empleo, de puesta en marcha de amplios programas de capacitación vinculados a la producción, de construcción de un servicio público de empleo en todo el país y de recuperación de la inspección del trabajo.

La segunda definición esbozada en esa oportunidad y que orientó, y seguirá orientando, nuestro trabajo fue la importancia que asignamos al diálogo social, a la negociación colectiva y al fortalecimiento de los actores sociales.

Prueba de ello, es un sistema de relaciones laborales abierto y participativo con 2.800 sindicatos, una tasa de afiliación superior al 35 por ciento y los 1.350 convenios colectivos que se renuevan anualmente.

Los argentinos estamos saliendo de la crisis y sentando las bases de un crecimiento sostenible de largo plazo para nuestro pueblo. Permítame señor Presidente, algunas pocas cifras.

Mientras en los años 90 se destruían casi 20.000 empresas, en estos cuatro años hubo un crecimiento neto de 66.000 empresas. La proporción de la canasta básica que podía adquirirse con un salario mínimo era del 34 por ciento, en la actualidad es del 87 por ciento.

La tasa de desempleo pasó del 27 por ciento en abril de 2003 a menos del 10 por ciento actualmente y, por su parte, el trabajo no registrado ha disminuido casi un 10 por ciento.

En los hogares de los jubilados, la pobreza descendió del 28,6 por ciento al 9,5 por ciento.

Cabe destacar que los valores y las políticas que nuestro gobierno ha impulsado para lograr estos resultados están inspirados en los principios de la OIT y han representado un marcado contraste con las políticas impuestas desde el llamado Consenso de Washington.

Por eso quiero acá, valorar la contribución de la OIT para la construcción y articulación de un discurso alternativo al producido por poderosas instancias financieras internacionales que basaron su visión en la confianza exclusiva en el mercado y su mano invisible.

No es casual que Argentina haya pasado de ser el mejor alumno del Fondo Monetario Internacional (FMI) a ser reconocida por la OIT por su compro-

miso con el trabajo decente y su vocación productiva.

Este reconocimiento es el resultado de logros que repercuten en la vida de la gente todos los días.

Con respecto a la Memoria del Director General quiero ser muy enfático. Este es el momento de desarrollo sostenible con trabajo decente. Este es el momento para sostener la necesidad de un estado presente, mediador, activo y árbitro del natural conflicto laboral cuando se trata de distribuir adecuadamente el ingreso.

Este es el momento del diálogo social con más urgencia que en ninguna otra época. No hay posibilidad de implementar políticas perdurables y eficaces sin la participación de los actores sociales. Así lo entiende mi Gobierno, promoviendo el diálogo con todos los sectores, a todos los niveles sin excepción y con toda libertad.

Avanzamos mucho, junto con los empresarios y los trabajadores, falta aún, lo sabemos y no bajaremos los brazos.

Finalmente, querría referirme a la discusión general sobre el fortalecimiento de la OIT.

Como ex Presidente de su Consejo de Administración, creo que, en efecto, debemos fortalecerla. Para mejorar, debe intensificar los actuales esfuerzos por ampliar su participación y su influencia ética en la «arquitectura internacional», desde su singularidad, dándole coherencia con los otros organismos multilaterales. Para la Argentina, el tripartismo de la OIT debe preservarse en el sistema de las Naciones Unidas.

Señor Presidente, la Argentina, a partir del 2003, colocó el empleo decente en el centro de las políticas públicas. Trasladando legítimamente los valores y principios que aplicamos a nuestra política doméstica al escenario internacional, creo que el trabajo decente debe ubicarse en el centro de las políticas globales. Esa es, me parece, la consigna más efectiva para impulsar el desarrollo global sostenible.

Esa es nuestra propuesta y nuestra convicción.

Por nosotros, por nuestros pueblos, por la igualdad, por la libertad y por la justicia social.

Original Arabic: Mr. YEHIA (Worker, Palestine)

During this session of the International Labour Conference, we hope to achieve concrete results towards improving the situation of workers in Palestine. We should like to thank the Director-General and the representatives of the Workers and the Employers in Governing Body for their statements affirming the inevitability of a solution and their goal of helping the Palestinian workers. We should also like to thank all of those who have preceded us at this podium insisting on the importance of providing an opportunity for Palestinian workers to live a decent life.

There is an Arab poet who said that one day the chains will be broken. Palestinian workers live at this moment in extremely difficult circumstances of poverty and privation, exposed to the worst forms of mistreatment, assassination and torture committed by the Israeli army. They also suffer from displacement and imprisonment. They are the victims of savage campaigns of harassment and arrest carried out by Israeli forces in Palestine. More than 11,000 have been imprisoned by the occupying forces. Israel has not ceased to violate the legality and will of the Palestinians by arresting and detaining a number of elected Palestinian officials and ministers of the

Palestinian Government, the Government of National Unity. Israel continues to shut off all access to the territories and to impede access to the labour market, in contradiction to the Paris Protocol of 1994. Israeli propaganda is spread to the effect that Palestinian workers have facilities for working inside Israel, but this is not true. There are no more than a few thousand Palestinian workers who are able to cross the "Green Line". These are violations which are taking place in plain view. Israelis are also trying to Judaize the Palestinian territories and use them to build new settlements. This limits available possibilities for Palestinians to earn their living. They are also changing the sacred nature of Jerusalem through excavations at the Al-Mosque. Israel has continued construction of its racist wall, which divides our territory into small cantons and has increased the unemployment rate, which stands at more than 50 per cent according to local standards. This has led to a two-fold increase in the poverty rate, which is now more than 65 per cent. Our workers are suffering many violations committed by the Israeli army at checkpoints, and they are suffering extortion, humiliation, physical aggression and, not to mention the destruction of productive enterprises. More than 42 per cent of companies have been affected. Given the extremely serious situation, we, the Palestinian workers, affirm first of all that we ask the ILO to take upon itself its responsibilities to Palestinian workers. We ask that the ILO work in this region with transparency and credibility, in order to avoid any repetition of the conclusions found in the Report concerning the Palestinian situation and the situation in the occupied Arab territories. This Report is simply descriptive in nature, and it is not even very accurate in its description of our workers situation. We insist upon the fact that the high-level mission which visited Palestine was simply a committee which described the situation and not a committee of investigation. This committee did not deal with Palestinian authorities and sources in a spirit of transparency. It did not advertise its visit to certain legitimate institutions, such as the Confederation of Workers of Palestine, on the basis of orders from outside the Palestinian framework given by people, who consider themselves to control our labour movement.

Secondly, we call on the organizations within the United Nations System to render justice to Palestinian workers and to help them to activate the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection on the base of standards which respond to Palestinian needs and which do not prejudice our national interests. We ask for support for job creation projects and collaboration with the social partners in Palestine, and we ask for social protection, decent work and sustainable development. We would like these projects to be not simply emergency aid projects but development projects.

We ask the Conference to denounce the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, of Syrian Golan and of the Lebanese Sheba farms. Let us not forget our need and duty to support workers in Iraq, our brother country, in Sudan and in Somalia. We also ask the Conference to support the Palestinian national struggle and to consider it a legitimate struggle until we can establish an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital and achieve the return of refugees, the suppression of settlements and the release of our courageous prisoners in Palestinian prisons.

I am privileged to make my short remarks before this eminent presence of delegates at this session of the International Labour Conference. This is a very important forum where we come together to express views, concerns, and matters of interest, as well as discussing the issue of socio-economic development. I strongly believe that the views expressed, the concerns raised here, and the discussion that takes place, will certainly help us to understand the underlying problems and help the ILO to develop and shape new policies and programmes which are essential and relevant to deal with the new challenges.

The Director-General's Report and the issues raised in it have drawn our attention. The Report has focused on various issues, with special focus on fundamental principles and rights at work. The Report points out many sectors that lag behind in terms of complaints regarding standards and improvement in working conditions and the quality of working life. Why is that so? It is because countries have their own specific conditions and do not have similar capacity for addressing the problems they face.

It has been found that over the years, countries have achieved significant development in the promotion of labour standards, improving working conditions and enhancing the quality of life for working people. However, in the changed business environment, businesses are facing problems in sustaining themselves while meeting the increased demands of workers. Failure to improve the situation is affected by various factors. However, it is not worth considering only one side of this. It is more important to understand the dynamics and the factors responsible for this and the problems being faced by business.

Most of you are aware of the situation we are facing in Nepal at present. We are passing through a period of transition which, on the one hand, provides ample opportunities while, on the other, creating immense challenges. However, we have been making efforts to address the socio-economic issues despite our various problems and the adverse business environment.

I would not like to repeat in detail the developments we have made, as our Government delegates have already shed light on those aspects. At present, our primary concern is to sustain existing employment and create conducive empowerment, while maintaining industrial peace and employment generation. The employers' organizations of Nepal are working together and actively involved in promoting good industrial relations, reducing gender disparities, eliminating child labour and developing better working conditions. A legal body is being established to work on legislative reforms, as well as to help industries and enhance the complaints procedures, labour laws and the regulations.

Youth unemployment is one of the crucial issues in Nepal. Taking into account the youth situation in the country, we have already started some work on it and are planning to implement a project on youth employment in cooperation with the ILO. We believe all these efforts are directed towards developing a decent work environment in the country.

The changed business environment and various influences have put pressure to make changes and employment adjustments. It has become necessary

to review policy and legislation. In this regard, the impetus has been given to social dialogue, with the Government and trade unions.

Distinguished delegates, efforts to establish industrial peace are our major concern. It is widely accepted that labour flexibility is required to ensure industrial growth and to respond to the global forces and emerging trends. Therefore, I would like to ask the ILO to look on the various issues that countries are facing across the globe and give its extensive support.

Mr. FARRUGIA (*Employer, Malta*)

On behalf of the Maltese Employers' delegation to this Conference, I would like to convey my congratulations on the Director-General's insightful Report. It has a sense of freshness and novelty in the sense that rather than focusing on one major theme, the Report opts to tackle a number of major issues that are interconnected in the manner that they address different aspects of the promotion of decent work for sustainable development.

The debate on sustainable enterprises, which is part of this year's Conference agenda, is a step in the right direction in that the role of business is recognized as being central to the achievement of decent work in the economy. However, the Report seems to suggest that world business is dominated by multinational enterprises, at the expense of ignoring the pivotal role of small and medium-sized enterprises, which are frequently the main generators of new investment, innovation and employment opportunities. This is definitely the case in Malta, where more than 85 per cent of enterprises are classified as SMEs. If the ILO is to cover labour issues in their entirety, the debate on sustainable business and decent work needs to come down from a rather elevated and idealized level of discussion to cater for the reality that is faced by the vast majority of enterprises, which need the support of a business-friendly regulatory environment for them to flourish and generate employment.

Certainly one major global challenge facing humanity is the conciliation of economic development and the material well-being of the world's citizens within environmental constraints. The Report rightly points to the need for a fully integrated sustainable development strategy, stating that the technological transition to sustainability can itself be a source of creation of green jobs. The point that sensitivity to environmental issues and job creation are not mutually exclusive is certainly of great relevance to Malta, as over-development may provide short-term boosts to the economy but have negative long-term consequences.

In his Report, the Director-General states: "Trade liberalization is associated with both job destruction and job creation." This certainly reflects the experience of the Maltese economy over the past few years, in particular since it became a Member of the European Union. There has been considerable job destruction as numerous low value added manufacturing units have relocated to cheaper cost destinations, and thousands of jobs were lost. On the other hand, Malta has experienced an unprecedented influx of foreign direct investment during 2007, which, together with a healthy expansion in financial services, has resulted in the creation of new jobs, a positive increase in real GDP growth and a drop in the rate of unemployment. It is a challenge for all social partners to see that the gains of these

developments are available to all society. A section of the labour force is still employed in low value added sectors, others have lost their jobs and need retraining to integrate themselves in jobs requiring new skills.

There is also a stronger need for closer collaboration and stronger dialogue between employers and educational institutions to channel the human resource into more productive channels, and to reduce the number of school drop-outs, which, in spite of substantial investment in education, is still of concern in Malta.

The Report provides a negative view of income inequality. However, it must be acknowledged that income inequality resulting from labour market forces can also be a way of encouraging job mobility to reflect the needs of a dynamic economy. Income inequality can, in fact, be a positive force as long as all citizens have the opportunity to avail themselves of better employment prospects.

The Director-General's Report makes a reference to the ILO's Constitution, which states that the organization of work cannot be separated from the organization of social responsibilities. This principle applies to all social partners, not just employers. Governments must live up to their social responsibilities through the provision of a regulatory framework that promotes enterprise. Unions also need to carry their share of responsibility in acknowledging that companies operate within a competitive environment. This is the way that social partners can work to reduce decent work deficits.

The Director-General points to regular full-time employment as an indicator of the extent of decent work deficit. I think that it is difficult to have an international benchmark to measure this. Moreover, although Malta has a relatively high percentage of its labour force in full-time indefinite employment, new demands from both organizations and workers may require a move away from traditional forms of employment. This should not automatically be interpreted as a widening decent work deficit. The concept of "flexicurity" that is being discussed in the European Union seeks to promote the interests of both employees and employers through more flexible work contracts. For example, the provision of part-time employment and temporary agency work can, together with other measures such as childcare, facilitate a higher female participation rate in the labour force.

On social protection, the Report is overambitious when it suggests a global approach to organizational solidarity across borders. It would be more realistic for the ILO to be instrumental in diffusing tripartism across nations, and through such tripartism, customized solutions to the issue of sustainable social protection can be designed, since national situations differ tremendously in their demographic characteristics, availability of resources and socio-cultural dimensions. The concept of social solidarity across borders is useful in tackling issues that small nations in particular cannot resolve on their own. A clear case in point is migration across the Mediterranean Sea. A comprehensive, transnational effort is required to address this problem, as small nations like Malta cannot be reasonably expected by the international community to handle such massive demographic movements single-handedly.

In conclusion, the tripartite model of social dialogue that defines the character of the ILO is re-

flected in the Maltese social dialogue institutions, and through the strength of this constant collaboration major challenges have been faced and surmounted. This is evident in the fact that Malta has been successful in its efforts to join the eurozone in the beginning of 2008. This achievement opens a new chapter in the history of the economic development of Malta, which has been possible through the input of all social partners. It is a clear demonstration that a convergence of ideas between government, unions and employers is possible on crucial issues to further the national interest. As the Report states, this is the basis of good governance in democratic societies and dynamic economies.

(Mr. Barde takes the Chair.)

Mr. BAAH-DUODU (*Government, Ghana*)

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Honourable Sadique Boniface Abubakar, Minister for Manpower, Youth and Employment of the Republic of Ghana, who has had to return to Ghana to attend to urgent matters of State.

On 4 June 2007, His Excellency Mr. John Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana and current Chairman of the African Union, addressed this august body. In his statement, which focused on Ghana and Africa, he underscored the ILO's positive impact on the quality of life in our part of the world. It is in this context that I wish to express our appreciation to the ILO for the good work that it is doing to uplift the dignity of mankind in workplaces, whether in the formal, informal, public or private sectors. I also wish to reaffirm Ghana's commitment to the ideals and work of the ILO. We believe that the ILO provides strength, direction and support for all nations, both weak and strong, in the pursuit of good governance, fairness and equity in a world that is free thinking as a result of new technologies.

Ghana fully endorses the ILO's determination and the Director-General's effort to ensure that the Decent Work Agenda, poverty reduction, employment, achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, tripartism, social dialogue, employers' and workers' rights, and good governance, are achieved in member countries. It is against this backdrop that we commend the Director-General's Report for touching on key issues by which decent work for sustainable development could be promoted.

The Ghana decent work pilot programme aims at contributing towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals within our second growth and poverty reduction strategy.

The programme has had a significant impact on the income of the participants. It has also created job opportunities, especially for the poor and for operators in the informal sector, thereby improving their incomes and standard of living.

The Government of Ghana supports the ILO's principle of tripartism. In order to ensure a peaceful industrial atmosphere in the country, we have been cooperating with the social partners in arriving at very important decisions that have implications for our socio-economic development, especially in employment creation and tripartism.

Ghana has decided to implement a social protection policy, beginning from this year. To this end a national social protection strategy has been developed as a framework for government and civil society to support the extremely poor in attaining their

fundamental human rights, as enshrined in the international human rights instruments, as well as attaining other international and national goals.

This includes strategies which will facilitate early achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the objectives of NEPAD and those of our own poverty reduction strategy. The strategy serves as a springboard for people to leap out of poverty.

The vehicle for the achievement of the social protection strategy is the livelihood empowerment against poverty programme leap. This will provide conditional cash transfers to the extremely poor with productive capacity but no alternative means of meeting their subsistence needs.

Unconditional grants will also be given to the aged, that is, those above 65 years of age, to people living with HIV/AIDS, care givers, vulnerable children and people with severe disabilities.

There are challenges in our pursuit of the aforementioned goals and commitments. We are, however, convinced that our partnership with the ILO offers us opportunities and expertise which will enable us to overcome these challenges. We are therefore going to strengthen our partnership through cooperation with and participation in ILO activities and programmes.

Ms. BYERS (*Worker, Canada*)

I appreciate the opportunity to address this year's Session of the International Labour Conference, and would like to briefly address some of the challenges outlined by the Director-General in his Report.

The starting point for working people is the growing gap between the very rich and the ever increasing class of the working poor.

By 12.30p.m. in Canada, on New Year's day, while many Canadians were still nursing hangovers, Canada's 100 highest paid chief executive officers had already pocketed what it will take minimum wage workers to make in 2007 altogether.

In 2004, the richest 10 per cent of families earned 82 times more than the poorest 10 per cent. In after-tax terms, the gap is at a 30-year high.

Up to 80 per cent of families lost ground or stayed put compared to the previous generation, in both earnings and after-tax terms. The poorest saw real incomes drop.

In our country, the poorest people are Aboriginal people, people of colour, people with disabilities and, of course, women. The gap is growing at a time when Canada's economy has doubled in size compared to 1981. Unemployment is at a 30-year low. More Canadian families raising children are working, and they are working longer hours. The gap between the rich and the rest of us should be shrinking, but it is not.

The growing gap, in both developed and developing economies, is the result of a globalization which profits only the rich at the expense of the vast majority of people. It is also the result of the deliberate abdication by governments, including mine, which have abdicated their responsibility to develop economic and industrial strategies to offer decent jobs and decent work for all.

Canada is losing tens of thousands of good jobs that pay family-supporting wages because our manufacturing sector is in crisis.

Since 2002, Canada has lost more than a quarter of a million manufacturing jobs, about one in ten positions. Statistics Canada recently concluded that when Canadian workers displaced by firm closures

find other jobs, they suffer an average decline of 25 per cent in annual earnings.

So, there is indeed a long way to go for working people everywhere to meet the objective of sustainable development with decent work.

While we welcome the efforts by the Director-General and the Office to bring greater coherence on the Decent Work Agenda within the UN system, more work needs to take place at the national level to reflect this progress.

Tripartism and social dialogue, quintessential to this body, represent a fundamental contribution to building that coherence.

I am happy therefore to report that the Canadian Employers Council has recently agreed to join with Canadian workers in efforts to bring the Canadian Government to ratify the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). We are hopeful the Government will proceed swiftly with the necessary consultations and ratification.

Also, the Supreme Court of Canada declared last Friday, for the first time, that the collective bargaining rights of workers are protected by the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms and are also a fundamental aspect of Canadian society.

The ruling refers to a 2002 case, familiar to the Committee on Freedom of Association, in which the Government of British Columbia arbitrarily cancelled the contracts of thousands of healthcare workers and allowed for mass lay-offs outside the collective bargaining process.

The Justices concluded that "the Charter protects the capacity of members of labour unions to engage in association, in collective bargaining on fundamental workplace issues", and it further noted "recognizing that workers have the right to bargain collectively as part of their freedom to associate reaffirms, enhances and promotes the values of dignity, personal autonomy, equality and democracy that are inherent in the Charter".

The ruling, notably, made a clear link between Canadian rights protected by the Charter and those in international treaties signed by Canada as a member of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization.

The Justices declared "the Charter should be presumed to provide at least as great a level of protection as is found in the international human rights documents that Canada has ratified".

Canadian working women and men look forward to decisive action by all levels of government and the day when these rights are respected in both law and practice.

Finally, we welcome the improvements to the very important work of the Committee on the Application of Standards over the last couple of years and look forward to ongoing efforts.

Unfortunately, this year, despite the ongoing and dramatic situation faced by Columbian workers and their trade union representatives despite the evidence of the existence of black lists of trade unionists, despite the evidence of collusion by both government officials and multinational enterprises with paramilitary forces, Colombia was not on the list of cases in front of the Standards Committee.

This setback to the Organization is not only regrettable, it undermines its very credibility in the eyes of people everywhere.

Nonetheless, we look forward to moving ahead with a stronger, more effective ILO, with the support of all, in the years to come.

Mr. ANGELO (*representative, European Confederation of Management Staff*)

First of all, as President of the International Confederation of Management Staff, I wish to thank the ILO for this invitation to the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference and to give our contribution, as in previous years.

I wish to intervene on the issue of the Global Report, *Decent work for sustainable development*. Within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy, the European Union has launched the challenge to make Europe the most competitive area in the world as a knowledge-based society.

Managers have a key role to play regarding this topic. Their involvement is indispensable for implementing a "quality jobs" policy.

We have promoted several initiatives in order to create a network of different players – schools, universities, research institutes, companies and employees' unions – in order to promote and create more and better jobs or, as we prefer to say, better and more jobs. In fact, only professional skills and capacities can ensure secure jobs for life. That is why knowledge is the first priority for all workers. But nowadays, that alone is not enough. We need lifelong learning in order to keep knowledge updated in response to the changes coming from new technologies, and we need to change the entire production systems in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

We think that the ILO is in a very crucial position to promote this goal at the international level. In this regard, our Confederation, as representative of managers and professional staff, also plays a key role at company level as a bridge between employers and workers.

Original Arabic: Mr. ALJABRI (Worker, Oman)

I am pleased to speak to you on behalf of the workers of the Sultanate of Oman. I spoke to you last year at the 95th Session of the International Labour Conference on behalf of the main commission representing the workers of the Sultanate of Oman, whose establishment was the first step towards trade union activity. I am therefore particularly pleased to be here again today as representative of the General Federation for Oman Trade Unions, which was established following the promulgation of a Royal Decree issued by the Sultan of Oman, allowing workers to form trade unions that protect their rights and interests and represent them on matters pertaining to their work. The Decree further allows for different trade unions to associate and form a general federation of trade unions to represent them in local, regional and international bodies.

The workers of the Sultanate of Oman have welcomed this reform of our labour legislation and the decisions taken in respect of the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining and the right to peaceful strikes and lockouts. It illustrates the Government's timely and constructive efforts to modernize legislation in accordance with international standards. The reform upholds the rights of all partners in accordance with the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, especially the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87),

and the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97). Legislation is currently being drafted that aims at modernizing provisions relating to health and safety at work as a means to strengthen the sustainable development of enterprises.

The next stage will be to assist new unions in Oman in building democratic institutions that can act in partnership with employers to achieve social, political and economic development. Our priorities will be the following: First, to promote a culture of trade unionism, collective bargaining and confidence-building between the social partners by way of seminars, workshops and on-site visits. Second, we aim at building the capacity of trade union leaders in terms of their organizational and management skills at both national and workplace levels. Third, to improve trade union leaders' representation and collective bargaining skills. Fourth, to incorporate tripartism in all employment negotiations, on the understanding that participation is the cornerstone of democracy. Fifth, to promote training and education for workers to help them deal with modern technological challenges and to improve productive capacity. Sixth, we intend to strengthen the role of women in the work of trade unions.

The General Federation for Oman Trade Unions, in cooperation with the ILO, has started implementing a project to establish trade unions, based on an action plan formulated in 2007. The project aims at setting up a national committee composed of representatives of local trade unions to disseminate information on the work of the General Federation for Oman Trade Unions by way of organizing a national conference before the end of 2007. We are also cooperating with a number of regional and international unions to prepare a five-year strategy for the FEDERATION, which includes a programme of action to promote trade union activities at the highest level, thus ensuring that trade unions can operate freely without undermining Oman's development goals.

We welcome the progress made by the ILO in implementing the Action Plan on the Elimination of Discrimination at Work (2004-07) and in closing the gender wage gap. We urge the Organization to continue its efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to do its utmost to strengthen the principle of equality at the workplace. In application of the principle of equal opportunities, the General Federation for Oman Trade Unions is developing a project intended to promote the involvement of women in trade unions.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our appeal to the Director-General of the ILO to take account of the observations made by the Arab group on his Report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, and our call on the Organization to continue to play its crucial role in protecting workers who are suffering discrimination in those territories.

Mr. BORHANI (*Worker, Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Before I begin my speech on behalf of the largest workers' organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Supreme Islamic Labour Council, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the ILO, and particularly by Mr Somavia, to improve the situation of workers throughout the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of the workers who, on 1 May

1886 in Chicago, shed their blood to defend their rights in the fight against exploitation and, in so doing, watered the seed that eventually grew into the ILO. Although over a century separates us from this event, we must admit, sadly, that the workers remain a vulnerable and fragile segment of society, all too often suffering the consequences of inter-State struggles and economic sanctions. As a result of its mandate, its importance and its effectiveness, it is vital that the ILO should protect these workers.

Although time is very short here, there are a number of points that I wanted to share with you.

Firstly, Iranian workers request and hope for support from the ILO in order to ensure the implementation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), not only in Iran but throughout all the member States.

Secondly, the Supreme Islamic Labour Council wishes to encourage the amendment of Chapter VI of the Iranian Labour Code concerning union representation and to ensure that it complies with relevant international standards. The Council also intends to work towards the establishment of a national confederation, taking into account the specific characteristics of Iran, bringing together all workers' organizations, both small and large, and all professional guilds. Ultimately, in order to help the workers negotiate and defend their rights as well as possible, the Supreme Islamic Labour Council puts its hope in membership of international workers' organizations. Here, too, assistance from the ILO would be very valuable to us.

Thirdly, the ILO is also setting up training programmes and workshops in order to build up its Members' skills to promote the sharing of knowledge. We hope that Workers' delegations will be able to participate in these training sessions and to derive the maximum possible benefit from the resources made available by the ILO.

Fourthly, generally speaking, employment remains a major concern for a number of countries where, with the increase in population figures, the transfer of knowledge, science and technology, and people's legitimate expectations of obtaining decent work, there is an assumption of a decent wage for decent work. The issue will have to be tackled in a professional way, and the ILO will have a major role to play in giving the necessary directions and guidance for optimal management of human resources, respect for workers' rights and equality at work.

Fifthly, world trade today would have us suppose that access to technology should be equal between countries (that is what the phrase "world trade" would suggest), but instead, it has become a threat to developing countries and third world countries as a result of the interference of certain multinationals in the market and the consequent deluge of imported goods. There is a growing gap between the very rich, who are becoming richer, and the poor, who are becoming poorer. As the ILO exists to guarantee the protection of workers and is therefore a major actor in protecting human rights, we hope that it will draw up coherent strategies and policies in order to commit itself even more to protecting human rights and to put an end to opportunist profiteering.

Sixthly, in conclusion, I would like to thank all the organizers of this 96th Session of the ILC and, in particular, Mr. Somavia and the Governing Body

of the ILO, and we hope that one day we will see justice for all and equality at work, the liberation of the occupied territory of Palestine by the Israelis and an end to the killings that are taking place in Iraq, Afghanistan and Colombia, among other places. In actual fact, the Iranian workers reaffirm their support for the Colombian workers, who do not enjoy fundamental freedoms. Their representatives are all too often arrested, have their goods seized and cannot bargain to make their legitimate rights respected. We hope that the ILO, together with the international community will be able to put an end to this intolerable situation.

Original Arabic: Mr. AZOZ (Worker, Syrian Arab Republic)

I would like to assure those present of the interest of our Syrian workers' delegation in continuing co-operation with everyone for the sake of our mutual interest in building a world that is free from any exploitation and manipulation.

This is a good opportunity to announce to you that last year saw considerable achievements for the benefit of the working class and people in Syria in various aspects of workers' lives. In particular, progress was made in enhancing the participation of working women in social and economic life, and their equality with men in regard to all rights and obligations. Our achievements also included providing decent jobs for citizens, especially young workers, and eliminating the worst forms of child labour. Syria was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the international Convention. We are proud to say that Syria is fully committed to the moral principles contained in that Convention and to countering any violation of its provisions.

In cooperation with the other social partners – the Government and employers – our union movement endeavours to ensure strict compliance with all of the Conventions ratified by Syria. This is especially so given that our country seeks to achieve comprehensive development which requires the efforts of all citizens in pursuit of the development and modernization policy under the leadership of President Bashar Al-Assad.

Despite this glamorous picture of the economy of our country, we assure you that our struggle for development is not free of troubles and obstacles. This is manifested in particular in the continuing Israeli occupation of our people and land for 60 years, and about 40 years of Israeli occupation of a beloved part of our Syrian land, the Golan Heights. The occupation forces are practicing various forms of persecution against our people, in full sight of all the world, and clearly flouting UN charters and resolutions, and especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. Many of the governments and speakers who took the floor here say they want peace, but in fact some are using every means to destroy other countries and violate their rights. Our captive people are living in a tragic situation in the prisons of the occupation. We call on the international community and all its honoured establishments and institutions, especially the International Labour Conference, to take a clear moral stance towards the practices of the criminal Israeli occupation against our people in the occupied Golan Heights. We also call upon them to condemn the policies and practices of the Anglo-American occupation forces in Iraq, who say they came to bring peace, but only brought destruction. All honourable and free people should affirm their solidarity with the Palestinian

Arab people in their legitimate struggle for liberation and the establishment of an independent state with Al-Quds as its capital. They should also stand by the Iraqi people in their legitimate struggle for the liberation of their country and recovery of its national sovereignty.

We appreciate all the efforts and activities of the ILO, especially its prominent role in enhancing and protecting union rights and freedoms, and also its initiatives in helping developing and poor countries in capacity building for trade unions and technical personnel. We also appreciate the role of the Director-General of the ILO and his wise guidance to the fact-finding commission he sends to the countries of our region in order to investigate the situation of workers and employers and Arab citizens who are under the occupation of Israeli forces in Palestine, the Golan Heights and the occupied Lebanese Shebaa Farms.

We believe in the importance and role of ILO in international life. We are committed to its principles, which we have ratified without any pressure. We are sure that the world would be a safer, better and a more stable place if everyone were committed to international labour principles, especially those forces and countries that speak about justice, humanity and human rights while at the same time violating the rights of the weak, under the pretext of many lies that are obvious to everyone. We are always ready to cooperate with all sincere and faithful people in achieving the principles and goals upon which the ILO was founded.

Finally, I wish you all every success and blessing.

Mr. ALAM (*Worker, Bangladesh*)

At the very beginning of my speech in this plenary session on the report of the Chairman on the Global Report presented before the 96th International Labour Conference I congratulate you and all of your colleagues here in the ILO Office for presenting such a report and express heartfelt gratitude to you all, along with all distinguished delegates, dignitaries from different countries of the world, on my behalf, and on behalf of all working people in Bangladesh. I also express my solidarity to the workers of Palestine and Iraq under foreign occupation for their patriotic fight for livelihood.

I listened to your report with all my attention and also I tried to go through the Report of the Director-General. I find these excellent with all the important aspects of ILO objectives, initiatives to meet them and firm commitment to working to eliminate all sorts of discrimination with regard to employment and occupation, based on sex, race, creed and belief. But it is hardly possible to make a critical appreciation of the Report in the short time allocated for discussion. Hence I intend to make some comments not on your Report but on the future initiatives of the ILO which could enable it to establish a friendly image in the mind of workers of developing countries, like my country Bangladesh.

Although we all are aware of the fact that the ILO, from its very inception, is a tripartite body, which includes workers, employers and the governments, understandably a common belief has developed among the workers that the main objective of the ILO is to safeguard the interest and rights of the working people. It is objectively correct that the other two parties within the ILO are not as vulnerable as the workers. The first party, government, is at the helm of the constituent country, having all the

authority to rule the country and make the laws. The second party, employers, have the wealth, and owning the industry possess the right to hire and fire the workers. The third party, workers, is the only vulnerable group with only manpower to sell and only finding strength in organization, unity and solidarity. Hence obviously the ILO is an international forum of the three parties that are not equal in strength, but to date it seems to us that ILO the ILO tends to act impartially in the view of natural justice and equity. Now we are reasonably afraid of the new initiative, according to which from now on the ILO, to implement its Decent Work Country Programme, decided to work with the WTO, IMF and some other world organizations like these.

Unlike the ILO, the working people of the underdeveloped countries have lost their trust in these international organizations, for a number of reasons. Because as per the prescription of these organizations, the so-called deregulation and structural readjustment in developing countries has thrown thousands of workers out into the street, jobless. Many of our viable enterprises were closed down by their prescription. It has already been proved that all their initiatives were aimed at the profitability of the multinational corporations, ignoring the national interest of the concerned constituent country and not in the interests of the workers. Hence we are very much concerned that the ILO may also lose its impartial character of safeguarding the interest of workers of the world by submitting itself to the interest of the transnational corporations.

In this perspective, I would like to reiterate that, the Decent Work Country Programme, or any initiative to eliminate any sorts of discrimination must be taken in consideration with the perspective of the respective society. Because as you also mentioned in your Report, the cause of any discrimination in respect of employment or occupation or in enjoying any fundamental social rights exists in the core of the society. So we must not forget that discrimination in a society is in fact the mere manifestation or symptom of the disease, not the cause. We cannot make an impoverished society lacking the means to meet the fundamental needs of man, with severe exploitation and with a gulf of difference between haves and the have nots, free from discrimination. And hence, to get rid of it or to eradicate discrimination from society, we have to think how to root out the basic reason for this illness. Without fighting simultaneously to defend economic, social and cultural rights, efforts to eliminate the discrimination in respect of employment or occupation based on gender, caste and creed, race and beliefs will be futile.

Finally I urge to you and the ILO Governing Body on behalf of the working people of the world in general, and the workers of Bangladesh in particular, to initiate the battle to defend the socio-economic and socio-cultural structure simultaneously and to uproot the basic reasons for society lagging behind, that is its poverty in all respects.

Sr. ROJAS ROJAS (*empleador, Ecuador*)

Señor Presidente de la Asamblea, señores Vicepresidentes, señores delegados de la Conferencia, en nombre de los empresarios ecuatorianos y en el mío propio, reciban ustedes nuestro cordial y respetuoso saludo.

Señor Presidente, quiero felicitarlo por esa designación hecha a usted, luego de agradecer a la OIT

por esta gran oportunidad que tenemos los sectores más importantes de nuestros países, como somos los empresarios, trabajadores y gobiernos, de poder reunirnos para analizar las situaciones sociales, económicas y políticas, por las que estamos atravesando estos sectores, que son el sustento de una sociedad.

Nuestro país, siendo su primer rubro el petróleo, por ser un país petrolero, tiene también una vocación eminentemente agrícola, ya que el 65 por ciento de los ecuatorianos nos dedicamos a las actividades agropecuarias y, por ende, es una de las fuentes de trabajo más numerosa e importante del Ecuador.

Desde hace más de tres décadas en que nuestro país volvió a la democracia hemos tenido diferentes gobiernos, de diferentes tendencias con muchos ofrecimientos de campañas como baratillos de pueblo, pero cuando han llegado al poder se han olvidado de sus ofrecimientos con su pueblo.

Esto ha hecho que en estos últimos años no haya habido estabilidad política ni económica en nuestro país trayendo como consecuencia situaciones graves para el ecuatoriano, tanto para los empresarios como para los trabajadores y para sus familias.

Señor Presidente, soplan nuevos vientos en América Latina, específicamente en nuestro país, el Ecuador. A partir de enero del 2007 tenemos un nuevo presidente que en toda su oferta de campaña ha ofrecido cambios a favor del pueblo, y está demostrando que en un país con decisión política puede cambiarse, y a partir del 15 de enero el Economista Rafael Correa, Presidente de los ecuatorianos comenzó a dar los primeros cambios. Por ejemplo: convocar a una asamblea constituyente, bajarse el sueldo como Presidente al 50 por ciento y decidir que nadie debe ganar más que el Presidente, es loable y digno de aplaudir porque en un país tan pobre en donde existe un salario unificado de 170 dólares mensuales para los trabajadores no se justifica que un político gane 12.000 o 16.000 dólares mensuales mientras otros se mueren de hambre.

Otro punto importante son los créditos, micro créditos agrícolas artesanales a un interés del cinco por ciento anual, a cinco años de plazo, el incremento al bono de la vivienda, el incremento al bono de la pobreza, son algunos de los compromisos que está cumpliendo nuestro Presidente.

No podemos dejar de reconocer, como empresarios responsables, el abuso de algunos colegas que hacen trabajar a los niños, en especial en agricultura, en el cultivo del banano y las flores. Hay que resaltar que otro mal que agobia a nuestro país es la fuerte emigración a los países de Europa y Estados Unidos de América, que desde hace una década se viene dando en Ecuador. Esto ha traído como consecuencia problemas muy graves como la desintegración familiar, un problema social muy grave en nuestro país.

Por esto creemos que hoy más que nunca, los sectores aquí representados del Ecuador tenemos que apoyar al gobierno para combatir un mal que cada día se agrava más, que es la corrupción. Por eso quiero llamar a mis compatriotas participantes en la Conferencia a unir filas con la decisión del Presidente de la República del Ecuador que es terminar con esa lacra, porque si no la exterminamos de raíz será un mal incurable.

Queremos agradecer el esfuerzo que está haciendo la OIT para erradicar el trabajo infantil y la trata en Ecuador; por eso se hace necesario que se apoyen

con fuerza las iniciativas que tiene nuestro gobierno.

Después de todo lo manifestado ante esta Conferencia, tengo que manifestarles que se hace muy imperioso e importante que nos unamos todos los empresarios, trabajadores y gobierno para conseguir juntos un mañana mejor para el futuro de nuestros hijos, en donde no existan niños trabajando, en donde los compatriotas que emigraron regresen a trabajar en nuestro país y en donde existan fuentes de trabajo con salarios dignos, y evitar así la explotación del hombre por el hombre y lograr que los recursos naturales que tenemos en gran cantidad sean para todos los ecuatorianos.

Para concluir, quisiera tratar de explicar que la gran intención del sector agropecuario al cual pertenecemos, es que el ahorro de hoy se convierta en una inversión del mañana y en una fuente de trabajo digno del pasado mañana.

Mr. DAVE (*Worker, India*)

I take this opportunity to congratulate the ILO and its Director-General for giving a new direction to the world of work by taking up the subject of the elimination of discrimination in work, as an extension of its Decent Work Agenda.

India had a glorious past where labour was considered a dignified activity. "Work is worship" was the slogan of our ancient labour. Indian mythology refers to Vishvakarma as the one who invented many skilled labour activities. He was raised to a godly position. The most ancient and exhaustive script of the world, Rigveda, refers to Bribu, the carpenter leader, enjoying the status equal to that of the king. Thus work can be decent and dignified as well. People should be able to pursue their material well-being and spiritual development together, as referred to in the Report of the Director-General.

Coming to the present times, the decent work gap, resulting in a sizeable section of labour being vulnerable to discrimination, is the greatest challenge faced by the world of work. The Director-General in his Report has rightly stressed the discrimination of women workers. The Report also enumerates migrant workers, disabled persons and tribes, besides racial and ethnic discrimination, as the global groups vulnerable to discrimination. I would like to add to the list some of the widely emerging exploited groups who are subjected to extreme forms of discrimination, especially in the present context of globalization. They are unsecured workers in the name of contract labour, temporary and casual workers and a wide range of unorganized sector workers, workers in agriculture, plantation workers, fishermen, etc. These are sections of workers who do not enjoy protection under any law. They work with discriminatory wages, longer working hours, inhuman service conditions, including forced labours, and a lack of job security, social security, safety and equality. Innumerable studies and reports have come out showing the tragic and discriminatory conditions in which they strive for a livelihood. They are islands of poverty and backwardness in social life. Hence I would request the Director-General to include in the Report, with the required importance, the plight of these vulnerable groups.

The issue of work in the fishing sector, one of the most backward groups, has been rightly taken up for discussion in this session of the International Labour Conference.

Trends of discrimination start from the run for profit in the name of the reduction of labour costs. The Director-General's Report rightly discusses the efforts made to enlighten the social partners about cost reductions while also removing discrimination.

The concept of decent work in its volatile form should be given much more practical shape by distinguishing its essential ingredients. Decent work should necessarily include five basic rights at work, these being decent wages, decent service conditions, social security, safety and welfare.

It is a fact that there is a fear psychosis among workers everywhere about the onslaught of globalization that brings jobless growth. Every country has felt that the evident face of globalization is massive employment loss, mainly due to the closure of enterprises in the organized sector, and wiping out the village and small-scale industries in the unorganized sector. New employment created is meagre when compared to the massive job losses. In spite of glittering publicity, fair globalization still looks like a distant mirage. Hence international compulsions in new names like social clause, social labelling, performance standard, etc. will be more misused than used. Let us encourage national compulsions through appropriate stringent legislations, government labour machineries, etc.

When we talk about the concept of decent work, spokesmen of globalization explain the position of labour with the undignified term "labour market". This term implies that the worker is a mere commodity for sale in the market. It does not accept the labourer as a human being. We strongly raise our objection to the ILO also repeating the same undignified term in many of its documents. Hence, I would request the Director-General to give direction to the Office not to use the term "labour market" in any of its documents hereafter.

Finally, we welcome the concept of sustainable enterprise taken up for discussion at this session. Sustainable enterprise and decent work should go together as two sides of the same coin. Contented workers, through decent work, are one of the key elements conducive to sustainable enterprise.

Growing recognition of the central role of the private sector should not mean that government intervention is reduced. A more holistic view is required.

In conclusion, if the project of decent work and the action plan against discrimination are pursued with Himalayan vigour, we hope a new beautiful world of work will emerge. I am sure we will succeed in that endeavour.

Mr. CHIBEBE (*Worker, Zimbabwe*)

I wish to congratulate the Director-General on his excellent Report. The theme, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, is most befitting, especially to the developing world in the face of globalization.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), has taken a keen interest in fighting against discrimination, be it at the workplace, or in society in general. At the workplace, the ZCTU has been fighting to address economic fundamentals so that workers, without exception, receive a living wage.

This was after having observed the huge income disparities between the highest paid chief executives and the lowest paid workers. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. To us, this was, and is, discrimination which has to be brought

to an end. There has to be equitable distribution of income at the workplace.

In Zimbabwe, we have to this end called for the setting up of a commission of inquiry to examine scientifically the otherwise cancerous development mentioned above, before it cripples the nation.

As regards the labour courts in Zimbabwe, victims of discrimination at the workplace have serious misgivings about the pace at which cases are dealt with. Cases commonly take up to five years before they are finalized, thereby frustrating the victims. This flies in the face of the law of natural justice, as justice delayed is justice denied.

On HIV/AIDS, the ZCTU would like to thank the ILO for the support given to the three social partners, which culminated in the partners agreeing to set up the National AIDS Council, with funding from employers and workers at the rate of 3 per cent from either party. We are, however, saddened by the Government's refusal to allow workers to choose their own representatives on the board.

Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the ILO and the international community for their solidarity and for the support given to the workers of Zimbabwe during these trying times.

We hope that this solidarity and support will continue until such a time as the Zimbabwean workers enjoy all the freedoms enshrined in the ILO Conventions.

This must be through the promotion of genuine and participatory social dialogue, free from discrimination.

Sr. ROJAS (*trabajador, Paraguay*)

En nombre de la Coordinadora de Centrales Sindicales del Paraguay, queremos expresar nuestra preocupación con relación a la gestión gubernamental en el ámbito laboral, económico, social, político y cultural, que sigue siendo ineficiente, y lleva al deterioro en el nivel de vida de los trabajadores con serias consecuencias sociales.

La desidia, la inacción y la ineficiencia de la administración estatal ha imposibilitado todo tipo de avance positivo. Por el contrario, la precariedad laboral, el aumento de la economía informal, el crecimiento del desempleo y el deterioro del poder adquisitivo del salario tiene como resultado impactos negativos en el bienestar de los trabajadores y sus familias que siguen en la migración obligada como grave violación a los derechos humanos.

La anunciada recuperación de la macroeconomía no tuvo un impacto positivo en la población. El cierre de empresas, especialmente pequeñas y medianas, sigue en aumento. Es nula la inversión en el sector productivo por falta de créditos blandos y a largo plazo. No existe política de reforma agraria integral. Estos factores imposibilitan la creación de empleo.

El aumento de la población económicamente activa nos presenta una situación caótica y un cuadro desolador.

En pleno siglo XXI miles de trabajadores, hombres, mujeres e incluso niños, siguen desempeñando tareas de 12 a 16 horas por día sin el descanso compensatorio que la ley prevé. Sólo el 40 por ciento de los trabajadores en relación de dependencia perciben el salario mínimo vigente. El 50 por ciento de los trabajadores formales no posee seguro social, no se respeta la estabilidad de la mujer embarazada ni tampoco la estabilidad laboral conseguida luego de diez años de servicios.

Los múltiples reclamos realizados por nuestra coordinadora al Ministerio de Justicia y Trabajo no han llevado a los cambios esperados. El derecho a un trabajo decente, la erradicación del trabajo infantil y el trabajo forzoso a que son sometidos los indígenas, y el tener un salario digno sigue siendo una utopía en nuestro país.

Otro aspecto negativo es la politización de las decisiones para la inscripción y legalización de los sindicatos, ya que la influencia e injerencia de políticos con intereses mezquinos, así como de empresarios privados inescrupulosos dilatan, e inclusive impiden, la inscripción de los sindicatos en el registro ministerial, hecho que conspira frontalmente con el derecho a la libertad sindical de los trabajadores; en algunos casos se objetan hasta las firmas de los participantes en asambleas y se realizan dictámenes jurídicos sobre la base de suposiciones, ocasionando serio trastorno y perjuicio a los sindicatos, convirtiéndose en jueces y parte, lo que es admitido por la autoridad administrativa del trabajo.

La soberanía nacional ha sufrido un duro golpe con la entrega de nuestro territorio, con población incluida, en Puerto Casado a una empresa multinacional al servicio de la secta Moon. La judicialización y criminalización de los reclamos sindicales y sociales es un grave retroceso al pleno cumplimiento de la libertad sindical y de la estabilidad laboral.

El poder judicial, respondiendo a intereses económicos, saca fallos en flagrante violación a los Convenios de la OIT núms. 87, 98, 29, 105, 182, 97, 95, 138 y 111 entre otros.

A raíz de esto y de la implacable persecución a los dirigentes y activistas de las organizaciones constituidas o a constituirse, la tasa de sindicalización ha descendido nuevamente a niveles alarmantes con el silencio cómplice de la autoridad administrativa del trabajo.

Finalmente, denunciemos la desaparición forzosa del trabajador de la prensa, Enrique Galeano, desaparecido hace más de un año, y cuya responsabilidad es atribuida al Gobierno por el Sindicato de Periodistas del Paraguay por este atropello a la libertad de expresión.

Mr. SAN (*Employer, Myanmar*)

It is a great pleasure for me to have an opportunity to address this auspicious Conference. There have been many changes all over the world as a result of globalization.

These changes are more conspicuous in more open societies and free economic systems. Goals, ideas and knowledge flow more freely than before in the globalization process. While the developing countries have found it more and more difficult to find satisfactory solutions to the economic problems, the developed countries that have been in the globalization process earlier than the developing countries have been enjoying already the benefits of globalization.

A developing country like Myanmar has not been able to enjoy the full potential of globalization. Furthermore, it has to give priority to the solution of the issues related to the ILO and the implementation of the measures on Myanmar adopted by the ILO. Due to sanctions on Myanmar, workers are facing many problems. On the other hand, the employers have to find solutions to the problems faced by the workers and are therefore unable to pay attention to

the problems of their own enterprises and businesses.

In the view of my delegation, the creation of employment opportunities is most essential to solve the problems being faced by the workers. We will not be able to create employment opportunities if we cannot run our industries and factories continuously. Lack of adequate investment due to the sanctions imposed on Myanmar has been a huge obstacle to the continuous running of our factories and to the necessary expansion of our businesses, thereby lessening our ability to create job opportunities. Lack of investment has become a serious problem, even affecting the production process and eventually leading to its stoppages.

I should like to take this opportunity to express our strong support for the Report of the Director-General. We are of the view that the promotion of decent work for sustainable development gives rise to industrial peace and will lessen disputes between workers and employers.

Leaving aside promoting decent work, due to sanctions imposed on Myanmar, factories have to be closed, production has to be stopped, the workers were retrenched and laid off. This is the reality in Myanmar unknown to the international community.

On behalf of the employers of Myanmar, I wish to bring the present situation of the employers and workers of Myanmar and their difficulties and hardships to the attention of the Assembly because we strongly feel that this situation deserves the attention and assistance of an organization like the ILO.

Mr. MANUFOLAU (*Worker, Fiji*)

I am happy to assure you of the cooperation and support of the Fiji delegation in completing the tasks which face all of us here in the International Labour Conference.

On 5 December 2006, Fiji was faced with a fourth coup by the commander of the Fiji military forces, who took over the Government after citing that there was progressive corruption in the Christian-led Government. However, he had Ministers in his Cabinet who had been incarcerated for the overthrow of the elected Government in 2000. Fiji has seen four coups in the past 20 years and no one can honestly say that the coup cycle has ended.

Whatever reasons one has for putting the country through this mode of getting power, the inescapable consequence is widespread suffering for the people. Within this, workers are always the most vulnerable. Employers have the opportunity to cushion the effects of such events through various methods, including redundancy of workers or reduced hours of work for their workers. The workers themselves are left with no such flexibility. The Congress has accordingly resolved to consider methods that are aimed meeting at the immediate needs and interests of the workers and other, broader issues. Since the unfortunate event of 5 December 2006, we have endeavoured to maintain dialogue with the military and, subsequently the military-appointed administration and other stakeholders, despite our reservations on the legality of the current administration. We have taken the view that we have a responsibility towards our members, who often suffer the most in such situations. We believe that by accepting the administration and its government irrespective of the legality of the circumstances in which it was brought about, we can ensure that the livelihoods of our workers are largely protected.

The Fiji Trade Union Congress expresses deep concern at the announcement by the interim Government to reduce civil servants' pay by 5 per cent, including for teachers, health workers and others. The Congress has called on the interim Government to review its decisions and engage in consultation with the public sector unions to explore additional solutions to manage government expenditure. It has also called on the Government to establish and implement an approach and timetable for the re-establishment of parliamentary democracy as soon as possible.

It also calls on the Government to ensure that the rights, liberties and freedoms of all citizens of Fiji are upheld, including freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and other acts enshrined in Fiji's 1997 Bill of Rights. The interim Government has adopted the Industrial Relations Bill as an Act. This matter had been pending for more than nine years. The Congress has welcomed this decision by the interim Government. However, the Employment Relations Act is in violation of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), in various ways.

The Congress pays tribute to the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), which guarantee freedom of association, the right to organize and collective bargaining as the primary focus of the relationship between Government and the two social partners. This is promoted by the 1997 Fiji Constitution. When these two fundamental rights are observed, other critical issues will automatically fall into place. However, in practice there are restrictions on this right, in particular, the failure of legislation to ensure that employers comply with judicial orders requiring them to recognize trade unions, and illegal and interfering practices to deny the right to organize in hotels and export processing zones, in particular through the declaration by Government that strikes are illegal despite unions following the provisions of the law. Moreover, in practice there are administrative restrictions on the rights set out in various provisions of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

This concludes my brief presentation. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss other matters not included here as part of the agenda of the 96th Session if the occasion presents itself. I wish to thank you and the other officials for your kind cooperation with our delegation in making our visit here pleasant and successful. I express our appreciation to the other delegates for their presentations and for the opportunity to meet with them in an atmosphere of comradeship. May the rest of the 96th Session of the ILO Conference 2007 be completed efficiently and successfully.

M. BOYER (*gouvernement, Haïti*)

J'ai l'insigne honneur, en ma qualité de chef de la délégation haïtienne, d'adresser à l'endroit de la présidence de ces assises les meilleures félicitations du gouvernement et de tous les travailleurs et travailleuses de la République d'Haïti.

Le gouvernement a reconnu toute la justesse et l'importance des thèmes placés au centre des dis-

cussions prévues au cours de la 96^e session de la Conférence internationale du Travail. Aussi retient-il avec satisfaction que ces thèmes s'inscrivent dans le prolongement des actions initiées depuis son installation, en juin de l'année dernière.

Je me permettrai d'attirer particulièrement votre attention sur les domaines qui constituent le champ privilégié des actions entreprises par le gouvernement. Il s'agit de la protection des droits de l'enfant, du renforcement du dialogue social et de la réforme du système de sécurité sociale.

Le gouvernement est parvenu, à titre de réalisations concrètes, à la tenue d'un symposium réunissant plus de 300 acteurs en vue de la validation du Plan national de protection de l'enfant; la réhabilitation physique et la modernisation du système de gestion du Centre d'accueil de Carrefour, améliorant ainsi ses conditions et sa capacité d'accueil; l'organisation d'un séminaire de formation sur la protection des droits de l'enfant à l'intention de quelque 70 cadres du secteur public concernés par la mise en application des lois et conventions relatives aux droits de l'enfant; la soumission et la ratification des conventions n^{os} 138 et 182 portant respectivement sur l'âge minimum et les pires formes de travail des enfants; la réunion de toutes les conditions en vue de la mise en place de deux institutions clés: il s'agit du Conseil d'administration des organes du système de sécurité sociale (CAOS) et du Conseil national pour la réhabilitation des personnes handicapées (CONARHAN), dont la composition fait intervenir, entre autres, les représentants des secteurs syndical et patronal.

Le gouvernement a, entre autres, réalisé la redynamisation de la commission tripartite qui planche actuellement sur un menu particulièrement intéressant. Il s'agit de la refonte du Code du travail et de la révision du salaire minimum.

Il faut citer également la création d'un secrétariat d'Etat à l'intégration des personnes handicapées rattaché au ministère des Affaires sociales et du Travail, l'élaboration des termes de référence du plan directeur de la réforme du système de sécurité sociale, la réalisation d'un inventaire des lois sociales qui ont vu le jour depuis l'indépendance en 1804 jusqu'en 2004, l'étude et la soumission au parlement des conventions n^{os} 135 et 151 relatives à l'exercice de la liberté syndicale au sein de la fonction publique, la mise en place des mécanismes devant permettre un dialogue permanent avec les organisations syndicales et patronales en vue de leur implication et de leur pleine participation dans la gestion de la chose publique, la consécration du mois d'avril 2007 en l'honneur des travailleurs et des travailleuses à travers une série d'activités ponctuées de conférences, d'échanges d'informations et clôturées par une cérémonie officielle autour de laquelle plus 14 travailleurs, chefs d'entreprise et ouvriers, ont été décorés de l'ordre national du travail. Il s'agissait pour le gouvernement, à cette occasion, d'envoyer un signal clair sur la fonction sociale que représente le travail, cette valeur fondamentale au sein de la société.

Dans ce domaine comme dans bien d'autres, le gouvernement est particulièrement actif et s'attelle sans relâche à la construction d'une paix durable et à la création d'un climat stable, favorables aux investissements générateurs d'emplois et de revenus stables. Il s'avère donc nécessaire que soit mis en œuvre un ensemble d'autres programmes, en partenariat avec les secteurs nationaux concernés.

Le gouvernement haïtien est donc plus que jamais déterminé à remplir ses engagements. Mais, face à des contraintes de taille dans lesquelles il évolue, il réitère sa volonté manifeste de s'engager sur la voie du progrès social, tout en misant sur la coopération internationale qui offre des facilités en matière d'assistance technique et financière.

Que tous les gouvernements et toutes les organisations d'employeurs et de travailleurs assument leurs responsabilités en se mettant ensemble avec l'OIT pour la création d'un monde plus juste et plus prospère.

Mr. KIKA (*Employer, Albania*)

I am very honoured to participate in the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference, on behalf of the organizations of Employers of Albania.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present the role of tripartite cooperation and social dialogue in Albania. Tripartite cooperation and social dialogue are based on a reliable legal system, on a well functioning economy, on the stable relations between employers and employees and also on a high level of social protection and qualification.

Tripartitism, as a phenomenon, plays an important role in the formulation of work politics, in the stimulation of social justice and the monitoring of work standards. This process can be achieved through dialogue and understanding. For these reasons, today tripartitism and social dialogue are considered part of good governance in globalization.

Partnership and dialogue are also in accordance with the principles of market economies because of their influence in the creation of a productive business and investment environment. They are a useful means to find the desired solution to economic and financial problems.

There can be no successful State policies and development strategies without the participation of the business sector, which invests, and employers, who activate the move of capital. This can be achieved only through the stimulation and consolidation of bilateral and trilateral social dialogue.

The sincere and serious cooperation between the social partners is now reflected in the Labour Code of the Republic of Albania, in which the demands of the business and the private sectors and also the ILO Recommendations and Conventions, have been given special consideration.

The will and engagement of the Government and its social partners for the development and strengthening of social dialogue manifest themselves in the common efforts to increase the efficiency of the consulting sessions in the National Labour Council of Albania, as the highest institution of social dialogue in the country.

This three-party institution has increased its own role, reputation and authority, and more specifically the role of its social partners, through adequate information, consultations and dialogue, which are key elements for social development and the harmonization of the interests of all parties involved, and are important factors for the socio-economic development of the country.

Where the role of the social partners is concerned, other important institutions are: the Fiscal Policy Committee, Social Insurance Institute, Social Protection Institute, National Employment Service and National Vocational and Training Agency.

Employers, trade unions and the Albanian Government have showed an increasing sensitivity to-

wards relationships with each other, expressed specifically through the ongoing consultations at all levels on the most fundamental issues such as improving the policies for social and economic development, the implementation methods, work and employment conditions and social security.

The tripartite Conference, social partnerships and the fight against informality, held in Tirana, are additional evidence of the high sensitivity demonstrated by the Albanian Government and its social partners in their efforts to combat economic informality, in order to create a healthy business environment, the necessary conditions for free and honest competition and the required social, legal and political circumstances for free, honest and compensated labour.

Having followed the significant engagement of the ILO and the positive outcomes that have resulted from this partnership, I would like to emphasize the importance of ILO initiatives and point out its success stories. I trust that such initiatives will continue in the future and that the Organization will increase its regional influence, and similar endeavours will serve to stimulate the creation of a spirit of cooperation, respecting universal rights and freedoms within the liberalization and integration process occurring in the south-eastern European region and beyond.

Original Arabic: Mr. ALMAHFOOD (*Worker, Bahrain*)

Allow me on behalf of the workers of Bahrain, and particularly the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions, I would like to pay tribute to all those participating here. I would also like to thank Mr. Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO. I would like to thank him for the very wise way he has guided the preparation of this session of the International Labour Conference. We are very satisfied with the Director-General's Report. I think it highlights one of the most important dramas afflicting humanity, namely discrimination, which is the source of many problems in the area of rights, equality, justice, liberty and democracy, and also has a significant effect on mankind's development, abilities and productivity.

We support the Director-General's Report and in particular the main points it makes. I will concentrate on those points, particularly with regards to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Our Kingdom is engaged in political and legislative reform and has been since 2001. We have seen the creation of trade unions and the General Federation after many years of struggle and many reforms have been made to legislation and the collective bargaining mechanism and to the labour market. We have also created an unemployment benefit fund.

Despite all the initiatives and policies that we have in our Kingdom, we should not be blinded to the dangers and hazards still affecting workers in Bahrain.

First of all, on discrimination, our Government insists on banning the right to organize in the public sector. This constitutes blatant discrimination between workers in the various production sectors. The General Federation has submitted a complaint against the Government of Bahrain in this regard to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association. Our Government has maintained its position of not granting the public sector the right to organize and has refused to amend the relevant provisions of the

trade unions act which would allow us to attain this goal and put an end to this discrimination.

It is true that the Director-Generals' Report deals with new forms of discrimination, but the flagrant discrimination against workers in Bahrain is something which should be examined. Another form of discrimination exists in the private sector and in public administrations, namely discrimination between unionized and non-unionized workers. They are often dismissed or threatened with dismissal. The most recent example happened only in March 2007. A series of instructions has been issued by the civil service management to all public institutions requesting them to investigate and take action against any civil servant who undertakes trade union activities. Let me stress that Bahrain must ratify the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). I think we also need to address the right to strike, once all negotiation measures have been exhausted. Our Government has introduced a range of amendments to the provisions on the right to strike contained in the trade unions act. In accordance with these amendments, the Government has the power to determine where strikes are possible. The Government has subsequently banned strikes in a range of sectors where, in fact, workers are entitled to strike, pursuant to internationally recognized standards set by the ILO. Our Confederation has therefore submitted another complaint to the Committee on Freedom of Association because we feel that this is a flagrant violation of workers' rights.

On the economic front, the privatization plan for many government and state companies is harming workers' rights. Many workers have lost their jobs or been forced to take early retirement. These practices are unfair to workers. Rather than concentrating its efforts on administrative reform and on ending corruption in the public sector, the Government simply chose to dismiss people.

Mr. KALAJA (*Worker, Albania*)

I am privileged to make a brief speech on behalf of the Albanian trade union organizations, which have played and are currently playing a very important role in the consolidation of democracy, after 50 years of dictatorship.

Since I appreciate the remarkably important role of the ILO in the democratization of my country, I will start my address by expressing gratitude to the International Labour Organization, which has contributed to the evaluation of working relations in Albania. The ILO Conventions ratified by Albania have helped us in our work and we feel responsible to constantly ask and fight for their implementation for the benefit of Albanian employees. These Conventions have raised our awareness on the great responsibilities that we have as representatives of the Albanian labour world, where, to be frank, the problems are still present and the social situation has not yet been standardised.

Although there have been successes in the functioning of social dialogue and in raising the role of the National Labour Council as a tripartite organism, and although the issues discussed in this institution are mainly focused on industrial relations and their enhancement, I would like to say that we still have to learn and assimilate from the experience of our colleagues from countries where democracy is

consolidated and the ILO has operated for many years.

I am of the opinion that it might be of interest to emphasize that, by respecting social dialogue and the partnership with the Albanian Government, we have reached many positive results in important budgetary sectors, as was for example the significant increase of wages by 20 per cent in the education sector, and also an increase of 25 per cent in the health sector. There is also a significant increase in retirement pensions, considering that the number of retired persons is very high as compared with the employees who contribute to the social insurance scheme.

We would also consider a success the draft law concerning early retirement for difficult professions, which has been initiated by the Union of the Independent Trade Unions of Albania (BSPSH) and is currently under the consideration of parliamentary commissions. We are convinced that through this initiative we are working to solve a social problem, related to a class in need and without any employment perspective due to age.

Making a thorough analysis of trade union operations in the past 16 years since the fall of the communist regime and the establishment of the market economy, we see that the socio-economic environment caused a reduction in the intensity of the trade union movement. This is not only an Albanian phenomenon, this is also seen in all trade union movements in Eastern and Central European countries.

It is indispensable that, during this period of globalization and the new positions that trade unions should occupy, we must work intensively to reform and strengthen our structures, to be able to face challenges in this period.

There is no doubt the ILO should take a leading role in this very big initiative.

As I come to the end of my presentation, I would like to stress that from our past experience we have structured a strategy on improving the forms and methods of institutionalizing relations with our social partners and the Government. So, by considering social dialogue as the key to agreement with the social partners, we have had achievements so far and we think that this is the strategy we are going to follow in the future. We have agreed on a set of necessary documentation in order to sign an agreement with the Government and the employers to solve some urgent social problems, thus bringing the three partners together to safeguard a social climate which serves the well-being of Albanian people.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak at this event and express the opinion of the Albanian trade unions.

Mr. SUBASINGHE (*Worker, Sri Lanka*)

I wish to convey our deep appreciation to the Director-General and the Governing Body for their persistent follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and in promoting the Decent Work Agenda, which is further evident from Report V, "Strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization" introduced to this session.

As pointed out by the Director-General, it is the logical follow-up after what was revealed by report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

Introducing this Report the Director-General has underlined the need for stronger national and international collaboration, and the need to boost the collective influence of the ILO and its tripartite membership to achieve better national and global governance, in pursuing the four strategic objectives of decent work: promotion of rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue.

Last year, Sri Lanka was able to formulate a Decent Work Country Programme followed by a decent work action plan, along with relevant identifying criteria, a project which was actively promoted by the Ministry of Labour with the assistance of the ILO Office in Colombo and in collaboration with tripartite constituents. So far, however, the Decent Work Country Programme has not gone very far beyond the precincts of the Ministry of Labour, and remains in our view, a statement of directive principles without an active operational, national framework. We believe that it is necessary to set up a national tripartite mechanism to oversee and monitor its implementation.

The Decent Work Country Programme should be linked with the development objectives and plans of the Government. Regrettably, in our case, this is still a grey area and is confined to a large document entitled "The Ten-Year Horizon Development Framework" announced with last year's government budget. It is more an expression of vision than an economic plan. Any further progress in this regard is hampered by the acute financial and political destabilization brought about by an escalating war with the insurrectionist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are fighting for a separate state in the north and east of the country. This armed conflict has been going on for over 20 years, claiming to date over 65,000 lives on both sides.

In 2006 Government's military expenditure was over 15 per cent of its revenue, and what was left for public investment was less than the wage bill for public servants. After the LTTE air raids about a month ago with low flying aircraft near the capital and the international airport, the tourist industry has almost ground to a halt.

The international rating for Sri Lanka as a zone for investment has plunged to a new low. In such circumstances there is little hope for the Decent Work Country Programme to take off in a coherent manner, even if it were to receive the due official recognition that we are asking for.

The economic impact of the above mentioned factors have seriously worsened the living conditions of the working class. The annual inflation rate is running at 16 per cent even according to official figures. The prices of consumer goods has skyrocketed. Although the Central Bank of Sri Lanka claims that the GDP growth rate last year was 7 per cent no such growth appears to have taken place according to many observers. The same Central Bank sources admit that the real wages of private sector employees continued to decline. Today the average monthly wage of a private sector employee is around US\$55 while the minimum wage stands at less than US\$50.

The country's priority today is a negotiated political solution to end the ongoing war. Although no one disputes this, peace is getting ever more distant in our opinion. Ten major trade unions recently wrote jointly to the Government regarding its urgency, however there is no appreciable response so far. The status of the conflict, which is continuing,

is one where fighting terrorism has assumed the foreground while the ethnic dimension which gave rise to it, has receded to the background. We expect to discuss this matter with employer organizations, to explore the possibility of a joint course of action. The subject of a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict has always been controversial, encompassing a wide variety of views. Now a new dimension has arisen. The atmosphere is highly charged in the context of intensified military conflict. In the tripartite meetings at which the Decent Work Country Programmes was discussed, the subject of war and peace was left out.

I take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation of the services of the ILO Office in Colombo, and the ILO Area Office in New Delhi, who have always been helpful in the endeavours to strengthen tripartite dialogue and for their all-round efforts to advance the goals of decent work in Sri Lanka, while assisting our trade unions in the development of their capacities.

Mr. FOLLO (*Worker, Ethiopia*)

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the ILO on behalf of the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) and for myself for this opportunity to deliver a speech to this important Conference.

We all know that trade unions are organizations established to safe guard the interest of workers. They have come into existence by the mere fact of the realization that workers are unable to make their aspiration for better life a reality in solitude unless they join together and manage to set up organizations that can safeguard their interests, turn their dreams into reality and attain their goals.

The Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions is the only vanguard trade union that has been permitted to carry out its obligations for the well being of Ethiopian workers.

Currently, like many developing countries, in Ethiopia we have a lot to do with respect to the global Decent Work Agenda. Some of the most serious problems hovering in the workplace include occupational health and safety including HIV/AIDS. Moreover, even though the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia and the Labour Proclamation fully acknowledge the right of industrial workers to get unionized and promote their interests without any intervention whatsoever, we have problems with respect to application. More importantly, unionization is cumbersome in the flourishing private sector.

The Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions would like to extend its reverence to the ILO for the attention it has devoted to the African continent, which can be exemplified by the Eleventh African Regional Meeting of ILO member States in Africa (Addis Ababa, 2007) and the African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Employment Creation and Poverty Alleviation in Africa (Ouagadougou, 2004), which have set the framework for the ILO's work in Africa. The Eleventh African Regional Meeting was earthed by the Ouagadougou Summit, where we adopted a set of conclusions that identified the main challenges facing the continent and endorsed the Decent Work Agenda as an effective strategy for Africa to tackle these challenges.

In addition, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions witnesses that, at the Eleventh ILO Regional

Meeting, His Excellency Mr. Somavia, the ILO Director-General, delivered a report that was fruitful and well considered.

On similar accounts, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions acknowledges the relentless help that the ILO Regional Office is giving to the Confederation on a number of issues such as decent work for youth and the social dialogue, HIV/AIDS and the world of work and others.

At the present time, most of the developing countries, including the Ethiopian Government, are engaged in multilateral and regional trade negotiations, all of which demand the liberalization of the countries' trade regimes and the eventual elimination of tariff barriers. The most prominent negotiations are at World Trade Organization (WTO) level and for the New Economic Partners Agreement (EPA). The massive wave of trade liberalization that has been undertaken since the mid-1990s and the further tariff dismemberment under EPA has generated an interesting and continuous debate in terms of its impact on the performance of the domestic manufacturing sector and on the labour force. To this end, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions has commissioned research which has come to the conclusion that if Ethiopia joins the EPA, by 2008 26,000 workers in the textile and leather industry of Ethiopia will be laid off. As a result, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions recommends that developing countries be given considerable time for self-adjustment prior to application of the trade agreements.

I believe that without a precautionary understanding of the impact of trade liberalization on labour, it is simply inconsistent to discuss the issues of decent work, HIV/AIDS, and poverty reduction in Africa.

Finally, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions strongly believes that the ILO in general and the Regional Office in Addis Ababa in particular will keep on with its support and integration in a participatory manner.

Original Serbian: Mr. NINKOVIC (Employer, Serbia)

The Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization elaborates on issues that the ILO will deal with over the few years to come. The processes that have started are of such a kind that they need to be fully perceived from all angles and solved using the best, most efficient, and viable solutions. Without appropriate mechanisms and well-qualified institutions that can implement such solutions in the world of labour and capital, these goals will not be achieved.

Globalization is a process that imposes the need for objective identification of consequences that involved. National economies must develop an approach that will allow them to enter world markets on the basis of adopted and existing standards. Social security represents part of this process, through which poor and developing countries are enabled to develop a minimum of social standards the circle of poverty. At the same time, social security approaches must be subjected to real frameworks and the possibilities of each particular national economy. There is no universal and single approach for social security issues applicable to all countries. This issue is primarily national, so suggestions for finding some universal approach to social security are not realistic and do not contribute to solving what is a very complex issue.

We should not forget examples of the excellent systems in Nordic countries; these examples are, however, far from real possibilities of a large number of developing countries and countries in transition. National programmes that imply the recognition of the possibilities of individual countries appear to be realistic and the only possible approach to solving these problems.

The management of the world of work and its modernization are of great importance. Employers' organizations should have support in recognizing the needs of their members and, within the strong legal framework of a State, they should, together with representatives of workers, create a relationship of trust and responsibility for the improvement of a business environment and to further the development of their economy. Within such an approach, it is important to ensure a balance and reality between flexibility of needs and security of jobs. Practice demonstrates that there is a need for certain old standards to be revised and adjusted to meet new needs, with simultaneous adoption of new standards which will enable a more flexible market approach to market, and a better introduction into the global economy. ILO standards represent an excellent basis for the development of modern ways of labour management in the world and they provide a framework for all member countries to achieve a balance between flexibility and job security.

ILO Conventions and Recommendations in almost all member countries are already included in a legal framework of labour legislation, and even in those countries that have not yet ratified certain Conventions and Recommendations. ILO assistance in setting up legislation and ensuring that international labour standards are applied relies, above all, on the national experience of all member countries, whereby each country is given the possibility to find a realistic way towards its introduction into the international community. The Union of Employers of Serbia will try, in cooperation with other employers' organizations in the region and with the ILO, to enable Serbia to overcome obstacles in the best possible way to its accession to the European Union and Atlantic integration.

Regional connection and development provides an opportunity to end the transition process in the most efficient way, and to ensure that Serbia is part of Europe where it has always belonged. Good management in solving existing challenges and the further adjustment of domestic legislation to the legislation of the European Union, represent challenges that demand all social partners to adjust themselves to the new conditions of the market economy and to assume, in that way, their own part of the responsibility on the road to globalization.

Mr. KYRITSIS (Worker, Cyprus)

Before I begin my intervention allow me to convey to you the warm greetings of Cypriot working people who hope that the results of this Conference can contribute to an important degree to the strengthening of the position of working people. In our opinion, the Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization very correctly deals with a common goal of the promotion of decent work for sustainable development. Contemporary, international reality reminds us of the ILO position that work cannot be a commodity, and that social justice is the foundation of peace. We consider that totally correct. The assessment in the

Report that globalization, in the manner in which it is taking place, is a procedure which can in no way safeguard dignity at work. It is also our own conviction that social inequality, which is becoming more acute due to the unjust distribution of wealth, represents a serious threat to decent and sustainable development.

It is clear that the policies presented as recipes for the idealization of the neo-liberal model for economic development, are recipes that have failed, precisely because they are totally based on the belief that the uncontrolled market can substitute social policy and social intervention. However, what is worrying working people and their trade union organizations is the measures that are being taken so that the declaration for the enforcement of policies to promote the goal of dignified work will be implemented as the Report of the Director-General envisages.

At a time when even the very right to work, and the right to form and join a trade union, are under threat in many countries, and when the regulation of labour relations and the undermining of the social State constitute the dominant policy and at a time when permanent and full employment, as well as regulated working time, are under attack, the implementation of the goal of decent work requires a real break from neo-liberal recipes.

For decent work to take root in practice, a favourable international and institutional framework is needed that will not destroy but protect the accumulated gains of economically active society in the field of labour relations, and that will promote the idea of social solidarity and the fair distribution of wealth.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to refer to the Report of the Director-General in relation to the situation of the working people in the Occupied Arab Territories. We express our satisfaction regarding the intense interest shown concerning the continued vicious violation of the labour and human rights of the Palestinian people. We call on the ILO to continue to follow the situation until the Government of Israel conforms to international law and fully implements the labour, social and national rights of Palestinian working people. Concerning our own country, Cyprus, for 33 years the goal of decent work for all Cypriots has unfortunately been impeded by the occupation of a large part of our country by Turkish troops, despite the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations. The desire and demand of Cypriot working people has been expressed through the decision of the Cypriot All-Trade Union Forum composed of nearly all the trade unions of our country, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, that the solution of the Cyprus issue must provide complete freedom of movement in our country, the right to freely choose an employer with the same terms of employment for all Cypriots, quality in social insurance and social rights, irrespective of national origin, religion, language, colour or race. We look forward to the help and support of the ILO and its member organizations so that the hour of reunification, independence and decent work for all can also come for Cyprus as soon as possible.

Thank you and my best wishes for the Conference.

Sr. RICCI (*empleador, Guatemala*)

Saludo la iniciativa del Director General de abordar varios temas que merecen toda nuestra atención y a los cuales no podré referirme por razones de tiempo, limitando mi intervención a los que considero más apremiantes para los empleadores de mi región.

En primer término, en el Informe se hace referencia a las empresas sostenibles y la necesidad de equidad. Viniendo de un país donde la informalidad de la economía alcanza ya cifras escandalosas del 75 por ciento de la población económicamente activa (PEA), debe empezarse por resolver los problemas que impiden la creación de pequeñas y medianas empresas capaces de generar empleo digno para incorporar a la formalidad a esa población que actualmente no está cubierta por las leyes laborales, no goza del derecho de negociación colectiva y de la protección social. Desde luego que para ello se requiere fomentar un clima favorable para la inversión privada, nacional o extranjera.

Vemos con satisfacción que el informe citado por el Director General en su Memoria, y que fuera elaborado conjuntamente por la OIT y la OMC, hace una valoración positiva en cuanto al comercio y a la estabilidad financiera como elementos generadores de esas condiciones.

No obstante, vemos con mucha preocupación cómo en nuestra región se manejan discursos contrarios a la evidencia histórica que pretenden atribuir al libre intercambio de bienes y servicios conforme reglas claras y dentro de un sistema democrático, todo ello generador de riqueza y empleos dignos, las consecuencias de vicios derivados del pasado tales como la corrupción, el mercantilismo y el clientelismo político, por citar alguno solamente. Esos discursos que se vienen materializando en regímenes de corte populista, no hacen sino volver al punto de partida, esto es, más corrupción, más mercantilismo y más clientelismo político y a la postre más pobreza.

A este respecto, vemos que la OIT está llamada a jugar un papel de primer orden conjuntamente con los demás órganos del sistema de Naciones Unidas, y en esto también coincido con la Memoria del Director General en la orientación y sobre todo salvaguarda de los principios democráticos que defiende y son pilares de esta casa. La defensa decidida y sin vacilaciones de la libertad de asociación, por citar uno solo de estos principios, debe hacerse a toda costa a riesgo de que esta Organización pierda su pertinente credibilidad.

El otro punto al que debo referirme es el de la modernización de la gobernanza del mundo del trabajo. Me parece adecuado el planteamiento inicial del Director General en el sentido que para los actores sociales es importante adaptar la legislación laboral a las nuevas pautas que permean el mundo del trabajo, confirmo que al menos para los empleadores lo es.

No obstante, el planteamiento inicial no me parece que la misma OIT, y menos aún los gobiernos, al menos hablo del propio y quizás algunos de mi región, estén convencidos de tal necesidad, que por otra parte sí es sentida por los empleadores que están viendo regulada su actividad por normativa diseñada para una realidad de hace 60 años.

Una vez más, allí la OIT tiene una grave responsabilidad, mostrar, con las evidencias en la mano, cómo la modernización de las legislaciones, no es

causa de precarización en el empleo por una parte y por la otra sí constituye una herramienta de incalculable valor para que los empleadores y trabajadores puedan diseñar con mayor amplitud su relación laboral.

Sabemos que la tarea no es fácil pues implica un costo político a pagar en el corto plazo, pero sus beneficios serán incalculables en el mediano plazo y es allí en donde esta Organización debe fijar su horizonte.

Finalizo haciendo un llamado al Director General y a esta Conferencia para que hagan sus mejores esfuerzos por que cese el hostigamiento del que está siendo víctima la Organización de Empleadores de Venezuela FEDECAMARAS.

Mr. BORGULA (*Employer, Slovakia*)

Part of social dialogue is about commonly agreed and widely accepted rules. Of high priority among the rules is the Labour Code and the related legislation, for example the Collective Bargaining Act and the Minimum Wage Act. During the last seven years in Slovakia we have had a new Labour Code and two significant amendments, changing almost the entire meaning of the Code and affecting other social legislation.

It is important to note that the current Labour Code was prepared with extensive cooperation for Slovakian employers and the ILO, whose role was perceived as a component of the heated social dialogue in the country. Our feeling as employers is that the basic law customizing relations between employees and employers becomes a political jack-in-the-box, firstly for politicians and then subsequently for the social partners too. I see the negative impact of such an approach on the basic labour legislation. The Labour Code is nowadays perceived as a pushover for a political programme of any political party and the proposed changes depend on the orientation of the party. There is only a short time available for group relations, usually no more than six months from the first draft to the approval procedure in Parliament. Changes are pushed forward without the time for deep discussion about the need for them among the social partners. The short preparation time does not allow for a deeper study of changes or even for assessing potential impact. Due to the political motivation behind changes there is usually a big fight among the social partners to gain as much power as possible, with only a limited intention to improve social relations.

Although we accept the right of election winners to make changes in society according to this political programme, we do not accept that the change should be bottom-up. This approach, disturbing the stability in industrial relations via political ambitions seems not to be unique at least among new countries in the European Union. An important focus of current conferences is on the sustainability of enterprises as a source of human well-being, and I think you will agree that the instability of relationships among social groups can undermine the sustainability of any business establishment.

It is clear that the problem of the instability of labour legislation is minor compared to the problems discussed in the Committee on the Application of Standards. But if such measures continue, there is the potential for a case too.

Another issue related to social dialogue is its quality or content. Social dialogue, is usually measured in the number of meetings held and the number of

persons represented. Depending on its structure, we can have a tripartite or a bipartite branch, or company-level social partners. From this point of view, we in Slovakia are just excellent, yet this perfection is not reflected in the results. The number of collective agreements at the branch level is on the decrease as is national coverage. The content of collective agreements, at least at the branch level, is becoming more formal and less binding. Tripartite sessions are very often composed of three monologues. The reason for this is that although everybody agrees that social dialogue is a precondition for social peace, and social peace is a precondition for the growth of the whole society, only approximately 30 per cent of social partners cover all the costs of social dialogue. In other words, 70 per cent of employers and workers are so-called free riders. Then there is the reluctance of the Government to give up part of its power in favour of sole governance by the social partners, and also the growing number of legislative provisions regulating or setting limits for issues that are normally the theme of collective bargaining. In addition, formal hearings of social partners instead of social dialogue achieve no result, yet the number of meetings make it look as if social dialogue is proving successful.

The results of social dialogue achieved at the level of a competent ministry are very often not accepted by the Governments or by the Parliament. There are no regular meetings of employers' and employees' representatives at the top level, which means that issues of common interest to the social partners are discussed in the full view of the Government. This is not about only blaming the Government, because the social partners' participation in this situation is significant, too. However, the responsibility of the Government and politicians is much higher.

My ambition is to try to focus the attention of the ILO on the problem of the equality of social dialogue. I hope I am not being too impertinent if I suggest that ILO support of social dialogue issues should focus not only on workers and employees, but on the third party in the tripartite arrangements too.

Ms. BANG ONSENGDET (*Employer, Lao People's Democratic Republic*)

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General on his successful Report, *Decent work for sustainable development*. Many parts of this Report cover real issues on the creation of more opportunity for all people. The Report mentions how to create more opportunity for all people in the society.

As the Lao employers, we are involved in business, training and creating employment for people in Laos. We are very much interested and need to take into account these discussions among the business sector, such as the issue of sustainable enterprises. This is very important and useful to help Lao employers provide more opportunity for improved working conditions and create more work for all people in our country.

During this period of economic development, individual business units in Laos have been using technology and introducing their workforces to that technology at an appropriate rate. Employers also encourage employees to build their capacity and treat them equally: it does not matter if they are men or women.

At the moment, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic proposes to study such instruments as the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951, (No. 100), and the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964, (No. 121), and the employers would like to express their agreement with the Government of Laos that we are ready to participate in tripartite study of the two ILO Conventions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

We approve the ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, (No. 182). These two Conventions require enterprises in the Lao People's Democratic Republic to ensure that they will never use child labour nor use young people's labour inappropriately. Moreover, in supporting these two Conventions as Lao employers, including the business community in Laos, we continue to coordinate and cooperate with the Government and with the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. We also continue to promote employment opportunities for women in all areas of business; we want this to be more acceptable in business society.

The Lao employers would like to thank the ILO for all the technical support it has provided to the Lao employers' organizations. We still need the ILO to continue to assist us to further strengthen the contribution of the Lao employers' organizations.

On this occasion, on behalf of the employers of Laos, we would like to congratulate you all on the success of the International Labour Conference and wish this Conference a successful completion.

Mme LUKIANA MUFWANKOLO (*ministre du Travail et de la Prévoyance sociale, République démocratique du Congo*)

La 96^e session de la Conférence internationale du Travail offre à la délégation tripartite de la République démocratique du Congo l'opportunité de venir à la tribune de l'auguste assemblée des Etats Membres de l'OIT pour transmettre chaleureusement à tous les salutations du Congo nouveau.

Une République démocratique du Congo nouveau, car ayant accédé depuis le début de cette année 2007 à de nouvelles institutions par l'organisation d'élections libres et démocratiques à tous les niveaux, et cela après quarante-cinq ans d'une quête inlassable dont la fracture socio-politique et économique est comptée parmi les plus douloureuses et meurtrières de l'histoire des nations du monde.

C'est donc avec un espoir particulier que la République démocratique du Congo, à travers ma modeste voix, voudrait Monsieur le Président, vous féliciter ainsi que tout votre bureau pour votre élection à la direction brillante de ces grandes assises du monde du travail, dont les points à l'ordre du jour rejoignent les intérêts de croissance de la République démocratique du Congo.

Par la même occasion, nous présentons nos vives félicitations au Directeur général du BIT pour son excellent rapport et pour les activités réalisées par l'OIT au cours de l'exercice écoulé, activités dont notre pays est bénéficiaire à travers un dynamisme particulier insufflé notamment par l'organisation du premier Forum national sur l'emploi.

Monsieur le Président, l'année 2007 ouvre une ère de tous les espoirs pour la République démocratique du Congo, laquelle requiert la consolidation et la stabilisation du processus démocratique entamé.

A cet égard, gouvernants, gouvernés, partenaires en développement s'accordent à dire que l'objectif majeur actuel pour ce renforcement est le changement social avec comme stratégie le travail décent pour tous.

L'espoir de sauver le Congo à cette époque par la création d'emplois décents et durables se manifeste au travers d'une forte volonté politique exprimée au sommet de l'Etat. En effet, notre chef de l'Etat élu a proclamé l'emploi comme l'un des cinq chantiers majeurs de son quinquennat. A son tour, notre Premier ministre a déclaré que l'emploi est non seulement une priorité dans le programme de son gouvernement, mais la priorité des priorités.

Au regard de ce grand chantier prioritaire que devient l'emploi en République démocratique du Congo, les questions inscrites à l'ordre du jour de la présente session de la Conférence internationale du Travail, et particulièrement les huit questions mises en exergue dans le rapport du Directeur général pour la promotion de l'Agenda du travail décent et pour affermir les stratégies du BIT, ont retenu toute l'attention de mon pays.

En effet, ces questions évoquées par le rapport du Directeur général du BIT confirment de graves problèmes dans le monde du travail du Congo, lesquels atteignent, nous devons le reconnaître, les dimensions d'un fléau, tant au niveau de l'importance du taux de chômage que de la précarité même des quelques emplois existants.

Pour contribuer à dégager des solutions appropriées durables, le ministère du Travail et de la Prévoyance sociale qui en a reçu mandat s'attelle à organiser le premier forum national sur l'emploi. Ce forum, haut lieu du dialogue social par une large approche participative, prévu au mois de juillet prochain, sera une occasion donnée aux partenaires traditionnels du monde du travail, aux différents acteurs et couches de la population, de réfléchir sur ce que doit être la politique congolaise de l'emploi. Ce sera aussi l'occasion pour le gouvernement de signer un pacte avec toute la nation pour la réalisation d'un ensemble de huit grands programmes cadres de création d'emplois durables et décents.

Ce programme, qui concerne notamment l'emploi des jeunes, l'entrepreneuriat féminin, l'entrepreneuriat coopératif, la capitalisation des secteurs porteurs d'emplois, tenant compte des personnes avec handicap ainsi que celles frappées du VIH/SIDA, la réforme et l'extension de la sécurité sociale, suppose un financement pour lequel mon pays pour les diverses raisons évoquées ci-dessus a besoin d'assistance, tant d'une assistance directe en termes d'appui technique, matériel et de renforcement des capacités de ressources humaines que d'une assistance indirecte en termes de plaidoyer auprès de tous les intervenants potentiels.

Monsieur le Président, pour ce qui est des autres points à l'ordre du jour, mon pays soutient ce qui suit: les efforts pour la réalisation des différents programmes en faveur des pays Membres et le renforcement des capacités de l'OIT auprès de ses différents Membres dans le budget 2008-09, les instruments préconisés en matière de pêche, car avec ses milliers de kilomètres carrés de plans d'eau la République démocratique du Congo cherche à quitter la pêche artisanale pour accéder à une pêche intensive, industrielle, susceptible de répondre aux besoins de la population, enfin, la question pertinente concernant la promotion des entreprises durables issue des présentes assises.

Monsieur le Président, malgré sa situation de pays venant de sortir d'un conflit, la République du Congo a le souci d'appliquer les normes internationales du travail. En effet, mon pays a transmis les rapports sur l'application des normes jusqu'à l'exercice 2006.

Eu égard à tout ce qui précède, le BIT sera d'un grand secours pour mon pays qui vient de renouer avec ses obligations vis-à-vis des organisations internationales après une éclipse de quatre années. En ce moment où le BIT/PRODIAF célèbre ses dix années d'existence, le gouvernement congolais joint sa voix aux autres Etats Membres pour souhaiter à ce programme plein succès pour les jours à venir.

En effet, outre le nouveau Code du travail adopté entièrement par consensus tripartite grâce au dialogue social, les résultats satisfaisants obtenus au Katanga dans la lutte contre les pires formes de travail des enfants influent positivement sur l'amélioration des conditions de travail dans le secteur minier. Le gouvernement congolais sollicite auprès du BIT l'extension du programme à d'autres provinces du pays avec un bureau à Kinshasa.

Pour terminer, la République démocratique du Congo exprime toute sa reconnaissance au BIT, particulièrement à ses bureaux de Yaoundé et de Kinshasa, ainsi qu'aux pays Membres pour l'appui dont elle continue à bénéficier dans divers domaines en rapport avec la promotion de la paix, de la démocratie, de l'emploi et du travail décent.

Nous vous souhaitons plein succès à la 96^e session de la Conférence internationale du Travail.

(Mr. Sulka takes the Chair)

Sr. ESPAÑA SMITH (*empleador, Bolivia*)

La excelente Memoria presentada por el Director General trae este año, entre otras novedades, la de referirse no sólo a un tema —como era habitual en ese documento— sino a ocho cuestiones, todas ellas importantes. Sin embargo, quiero centrar mi intervención en destacar fundamentalmente el tema del fomento de las empresas sostenibles, cuya importancia se denota por la directa conexión que tiene con el mayor desafío de carácter global que actualmente enfrenta a las economías y el mundo del trabajo, el del empleo, también como medio esencial para reducir los acusados índices de pobreza.

En efecto, no se conoce, señor Presidente, un instrumento mejor para generar empleo que el de la empresa y, particularmente, el de la empresa privada por su reconocida aptitud de gestión, de gestión sustentable y su capacidad autónoma de generar empleo: empleo productivo y libremente escogido, o trabajo decente, como proclama la OIT.

En ese entendido, un conjunto de 15 instituciones privadas ha conformado recientemente en Bolivia una asociación dedicada a la promoción en el país de una cultura emprendedora, del espíritu emprendedor, conscientes, además, de que el potencial del emprendimiento no se dirige únicamente a crear empleo asalariado de corte tradicional sino que, adicionalmente, favorece la creación de otros tipos de ocupación y de servicios a tono con las tendencias y demandas del mercado laboral de nuestros días, tan diverso y dinámico.

Ese esfuerzo no ha sido, hasta el momento, secundado por los poderes públicos en Bolivia, en parte por la reciente iniciación de este movimiento. Ojalá que en el futuro concite el respaldo gubernamental, a pesar de que la política económica que

pretende ejecutar el actual Gobierno asigna al sector privado un papel desmerecido e irrealmente secundario.

Los empleadores bolivianos respaldan, señor Presidente, la introducción de políticas públicas en el país que tengan un carácter inclusivo, siempre que no conlleven el establecimiento simultáneo de nuevas exclusiones.

Como apropiadamente se afirma en las conclusiones de la Comisión respectiva en esta Conferencia, las empresas requieren fundamentalmente reglas claras, estables, el cumplimiento de contratos y el cumplimiento de las obligaciones sociales, es decir, que requiere, en suma, la vigencia del estado de derecho que otorga a todos seguridad jurídica. Constatamos que, al presente, el entorno empresarial en Bolivia no goza de esa seguridad.

Las empresas y sus trabajadores requieren, por otra parte, que la política laboral sea administrada bajo los principios centrales que sustenta la OIT, es decir el diálogo social, la consulta y el tripartismo. Debemos lamentar que tales principios ya han sido reemplazados en Bolivia por una actitud gubernamental absolutamente unilateral.

De esa forma, se ha instaurado un régimen de virtual inamovilidad — el más rígido de la región — y se han atribuido para ese efecto facultades jurisdiccionales a funcionarios administrativos, a través de simples decretos del poder ejecutivo y hasta por meras resoluciones ministeriales que contradicen y derogan leyes de la República, violando la estructura jerárquica de las normas que establece la Constitución Política del Estado.

Tanto al introducir ese régimen de inamovilidad laboral, que rige solamente para el sector privado, como al intervenir por otra parte en el área de las remuneraciones, disponiendo incrementos — que la ley reserva a la negociación entre los interlocutores sociales — e inclusive, al fijar el salario mínimo sin observar los mecanismos de consulta que estipulan los convenios de la OIT, se ha vulnerado el principio de legalidad.

Debo dejar en claro que, con estas afirmaciones, no se objetan los montos de la remuneración, no se objetan los montos del salario, sino la forma irregular de su tratamiento. Hemos expresado a nuestras autoridades que ese tipo de medidas, antes que fomentar el empleo, lo perjudica.

Desalienta la creación y el mantenimiento del empleo, y tiende inexorablemente a estimular la creciente informalidad que constituye un segmento obviamente desprotegido.

En el Programa de Trabajo Decente que se aplicará en Bolivia durante este año y el próximo, se ha consignado un examen de la legislación del trabajo con miras a su reforma. Nos existe la esperanza de que, con la asistencia técnica de la OIT, se encare esa reforma con sucesión a los principios y metodologías que propugna esta casa, y que a base del diálogo social y el tripartismo se arribe a fórmulas concertadas, equilibradas y equitativas. Esperamos finalmente que, como resultado de los debates acerca del fomento de las empresas sostenibles, se arribe a conclusiones prácticas y a políticas concretas, mediante las cuales la OIT pueda continuar contribuyendo positivamente a la promoción de un entorno empresarial que propicie un mayor desarrollo económico y un sólido crecimiento del empleo.

Public Services International (PSI) will celebrate its 100th anniversary in September 2007. With our 650 affiliates in over 150 countries, we advocate, together with civil society, user groups and, where appropriate, public authorities, the essential role of public services in sustainable development and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. PSI welcomes the recent report on trade and employment prepared jointly by the ILO and the World Trade Organization (WTO). It was an overdue first step in developing a joint analysis on the impacts of trade policies. We encourage the ILO to continue this cooperation and to assist the WTO in conducting employment impact studies of key developments and to include these assessments in the trade policy reviews of member States. PSI also welcomes the policy forum between the ILO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the WTO to develop greater policy coherence around the Decent Work Agenda. PSI would welcome the inclusion of a specialized agency on gender equality in this forum as well.

We support the views expressed in the Director-General's Report, which questions the validity of fiscal and monetary prosperity programmes which have resulted in extremely-low public service pay and pose serious challenges for the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. PSI argues that water and other essential services such as health should not be treated as a commodity to be sold for profit but as a human right and public good. PSI promotes the public ownership and management of water and sanitation services and argues, together with an increasing number of civil society organizations, that the Millennium Development Goals on water will not be met without substantive investment in public delivery. PSI urges caution to those who advocate public-private partnerships as a means to deliver on commitments to sustainable development and decent work. PSI welcomes the Global Report on tackling equality. While the Report refers to the importance of a national legislative framework and appropriate machinery, PSI also considers that more attention should be paid to the role of the public sector in creating an enabling environment for equality and equal opportunities. The Report provides a great focus on the issue of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, an issue to which PSI has also called attention for over two years. PSI is also working with the affiliates, particularly in the Inter-American region, on issues of racism to promote the draft convention of the Organization of American States against Racism. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the ILO on these issues. We see with dismay that, yet again, this year the Workers' delegation to the Conference has the worst record on gender representativity. In our opinion, it is indeed time to tackle inequality. It is time for affirmative action measures here at the Conference.

On 10 and 11 July this year, the Belgium Government will host the global forum on migration and development in Brussels. PSI notes with regret that there is very limited space for trade union participation in this process. It also would argue for a strengthened role for the ILO in this forum, to ensure that labour migration is addressed within the framework of international human rights norms and labour standards. PSI appreciates the vital role of

the International Labour Standards Department and the ILO supervisory mechanisms. The number of complaints of severe violations and repression against public sector trade union leaders remains unacceptably high. PSI requests the ILO to maintain its resource levels for this area of work. PSI is particularly concerned about the violent attacks on the Korean Government employees' union and the failure of the Korean Government to implement all the recommendations of the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association.

We recall that the situation of violence and repression in Colombia remains acute, with 72 trade unionists assassinated in 2006. PSI deeply regrets that the case was not brought to the attention of the Conference Committee this year. PSI is also associated with an important case against the United States Government concerning the prohibition of bargaining rights in North Carolina, and calls on the United States Government to review its position and implement the Committee's recommendations. PSI is also associated with a case concerning harassment against the autonomous public sector unions in Algeria and is concerned about violence and the intimidation of autonomous trade unions in other parts of the Maghreb and Arab region. Finally, PSI has called on the international community on a number of occasions over the last year, in particular the European Union and the United States Government, to release funds earmarked for development assistance to Palestine. The Director-General's Report provides graphic information about the deterioration in living standards for the population as a whole as a result of the non-payment of wages to 160,000 civil servants. The Government of Norway is to be commended for its recent decision to release humanitarian aid.

Sr. CELI VEGAS (*representante, Centro de Intercambios y Cooperación para América Latina*)

En nombre del Centro de Intercambios y Cooperación para América Latina (CICAL), les transmito mis cordiales saludos a todos los participantes de esta digna Asamblea y felicito a los miembros de la Junta Directiva por su brillante conducción de las reuniones.

El Informe del Director General de la OIT: *La igualdad en el trabajo: afrontar los retos que se plantean*, muestra los frutos de la concatenación de los esfuerzos destinados a atenuar las discriminaciones derivadas de la globalización en un mercado altamente competitivo.

El trabajo de los migrantes, como una de las expresiones de las discriminaciones que sufren los trabajadores, forma parte de la agenda de la OIT. Los trabajadores migrantes son a menudo objeto de discriminaciones en razón de su color, raza, religión, real o supuesta, o de una combinación de estos factores, y pueden ser desfavorecidos por el simple hecho de ser migrantes.

Los derechos de los migrantes han tenido una evolución hacia la igualdad en varios instrumentos internacionales. La Convención Internacional sobre la Eliminación de todas las Formas de Discriminación Racial, aprobada por la Asamblea General de Naciones Unidas en 1965 y que entró en vigor en 1969 es el punto de partida. Diversas iniciativas y resoluciones de organizaciones regionales e internacionales han contribuido a la Convención Internacional sobre la protección de los derechos de todos los trabajadores migratorios y de sus familiares

adoptada por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas en su Resolución 45/158 del 18 de diciembre de 1990, y que entró en vigor en el año 2003.

Muchos son los derechos consagrados en estos textos internacionales, tanto en los Estados de origen, como en los de tránsito y de recepción. El derecho a la vida, a la libertad de conciencia, expresión, religión, seguridad personal, así como a los mismos derechos que tienen los nacionales ante los tribunales de justicia, entre otros, se encuentran protegidos en el ámbito internacional. Las inconsistencias del tratamiento de los migrantes se encuentran en las políticas nacionales.

Según la OIT, los movimientos de hombres y mujeres en la búsqueda de mejores posibilidades de empleo en el extranjero, de los cuales se estima 86 millones de individuos — 32 millones en las regiones desarrolladas — deberán aumentar en los próximos años. En Europa occidental, el 10 por ciento de la mano de obra se compone actualmente de migrantes. Las discriminaciones de las cuales son víctimas los trabajadores migrantes se manifiestan notablemente por el hecho de que son numerosos, independientemente del nivel de calificaciones, en empleos peligrosos y degradantes, donde la protección es a menudo parcial o ausente de derechos.

¿Cómo hacer compatible la migración exacerbada por la globalización y las políticas nacionales? Ese es el dilema que afrontan los dirigentes de los países desarrollados y en vías de desarrollo. Los acuerdos de integración regional económica parecen otorgar una protección a cierto tipo de migrantes. El cuadro jurídico de la Unión Europea acuerda la igualdad de oportunidades y de tratamiento a los trabajadores migrantes de terceros países que residen legalmente en la zona. Sin embargo, existe una masa de trabajadores en situación irregular y que desarrollan actividades domésticas u otros servicios útiles a la comunidad pero que, por carecer de autorizaciones para trabajar, se encuentran sometidos a los abusos de las autoridades, de los empleadores y a veces son víctimas de las mafias internacionales.

Los temas migratorios son incluidos en las negociaciones de los acuerdos de asociación comercial regional. La migración es aceptada o tolerada cuando la transferencia de recursos humanos aporta elementos positivos al desarrollo del país receptor de migrantes. La migración es rechazada o criticada cuando genera una economía informal. Estas visiones de la migración es necesario confrontarlas con las realidades de los países.

Las organizaciones de la sociedad civil juegan un rol importante como catalizador para sensibilizar a los Estados en la aplicación de los estándares internacionales adoptados por las convenciones internacionales.

Sr. GÓMEZ (*representante, Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores*)

Mientras gobiernos, empleadores y trabajadores hablamos de trabajo decente, en la práctica nos encontramos con que el común denominador en la gran mayoría de países es el trabajo indecente, caracterizado por la precariedad, la inestabilidad, la baja remuneración, así como la práctica y la desaparición de una relación directa capital-trabajo por la vía de la contratación civil, las cooperativas de trabajo asociado, los sistemas de contratistas y empresas temporales, las nóminas paralelas y todos aquellos métodos que gobiernos y empleadores se

han ingeniado para burlar los derechos de la clase trabajadora.

En América Latina y el Caribe es imposible establecer una relación coherente entre trabajo decente y desarrollo sostenible, cuando en la mayoría de los países el común denominador es la aplicación del consenso de Washington, con sus secuelas de privatizaciones, ajustes estructurales, desempleo y empobrecimiento de los trabajadores y poblaciones en toda la región.

Quienes defendemos los principios originales que dieron vida a esta casa común no podemos guardar silencio frente a las constantes violaciones que de manera continua vienen ejerciendo empresarios y gobiernos en contra de los convenios fundamentales de la OIT, tal como pudimos constatarlo a instancias de los informes presentados por la Comisión de Expertos y cuyos casos más flagrantes fueron objeto de intensos debates en la Comisión de Aplicación de Normas.

Debemos expresar nuestras preocupaciones como organización continental, por cuanto que mientras que el señor Director y la Oficina hablan y propician sistemas de trabajo decente, desarrollo sostenible y de tripartismo, es evidente constatar un clima permanente de violaciones constantes a la libertad sindical, tal como ocurre en países como Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica y Colombia, entre otros.

Precisamente en el caso específico de Colombia, en nombre de la Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores expresamos nuestra solidaridad para con el sindicalismo colombiano, teniendo en cuenta que, fruto de un absurdo, en la Comisión de Aplicación de Normas no fue posible incluirla en la lista de países llamados a declarar y rendir un informe ante la Comisión, frente a las graves violaciones a la libertad sindical, los derechos humanos y el irrespeto que de manera constante impacta al sindicalismo en Colombia, especialmente en lo relacionado con el derecho a la vida.

Huelga afirmar que es indispensable hacer un alto en el camino para impedir que continuemos en una carrera desenfrenada hacia el abismo, producto de los fenómenos de la precarización de los sistemas de contratación de los trabajadores, la reducción de los salarios, el desmonte de los sistemas de seguridad social, situaciones éstas que, en el marco de la globalización capitalista, vienen dejando a la clase trabajadora sin un mínimo de derechos, atentando así contra la democracia, la paz y la convivencia pacífica en todo el planeta.

No olvidemos que la paz sólo puede construirse teniendo como fundamento la justicia.

El abismo cada vez mayor entre quienes hacen ostentación de riquezas, no siempre bien habidas, y la miseria reinante en la inmensa mayoría de nuestros pueblos, las reducciones en los ingresos de la población, la informalización de la economía y la precariedad laboral, pueden ser en el corto plazo el detonante más peligroso para la estabilidad democrática en cada uno de nuestros países.

Así como hemos condenado el bloqueo norteamericano a la isla de Cuba, en esta ocasión hacemos un nuevo llamado al señor Presidente en funciones de Cuba, comandante Raúl Castro, para que libere al compañero Pedro Pablo Álvarez y los seis compañeros sindicalistas presos en la isla por haber constituido un sindicato independiente.

We have carefully read the Report of the Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, on the situation of workers in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories presented to the Conference. While we would like to express our gratitude for the continuous interest given to the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Conference in 1974 and 1980, we should like to make some observations concerning the style and content of the Report.

First, with regard to the style, the Report is entitled “the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories”, whereas it should be entitled “The situation of Arab workers in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories”. It is crucial to define these workers correctly and to specify their geographic locations.

Second, as in previous reports, the terminology used in the Report is inconsistent with the terms recognized at the international level. In this Report, we find expressions such as “the Palestinian population and people”, instead of “Palestinian citizens”. Yet, defining the identity of Palestinians and their citizenship is of prime importance, in accordance with international law. We could make a similar observation with regard to the use of the expression “the Syrian Arab people”, rather than the expression “Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan”. Defining their identity is of the utmost importance, particularly when these citizens live in their homeland, Syria, part of which is occupied by Israel.

Third, the Report limits itself to describing the plight of Palestinians and Syrians in the occupied territories, but remains silent about the root causes of the current situation, namely the Israeli occupation and the policies of closure, repression, confiscation of lands, road blocks, collective punishment, forced displacement and economic and social exclusion. These policies have led to the current tragic situation of workers and their families, who struggle to survive on extremely limited resources in a very difficult security situation that undermines all human dignity. We therefore urge the International Labour Conference and the ILO Governing Body to take measures to ensure respect for the rights of Palestinian and Syrian workers and to put an end to the deplorable Israeli practices, which are a violation of the right to decent work and human values.

Fourth, the Report does not mention the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, which consider Israel’s decision to annex the Syrian Golan to be null and void and to have no legal consequences. This should be mentioned to remind the international community that it must ensure the follow-up of its resolutions adopted under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It is legitimate to ask, is the ILO not a United Nations agency and part of the United Nations system?

With regard to the content, the high-level mission has conducted consultations with various stakeholders in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, especially with the Palestinian Minister of Labour, the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions and other relevant bodies, to gain an insight into the situation of workers. The mission failed to make it clear that the practices used by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian workers undermine human dignity and breach the standards

adopted by the ILO and ratified by all States. The mission also fails to mention that the separation wall, which had been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion, undermines the interests of workers and their families. Furthermore, the increasing number of checkpoints, which restrict the free movement of people and economic activities, enclose Palestinian and Syrian citizens in an open prison and take away their right to freedom and their right to work.

Attributing the same degree of responsibility for the situation to the occupying power, Israel, and the Palestinian and Syrian workers that are subject to this occupation is unjust, because Palestinians and Syrians were attacked on their own lands by a foreign occupation power that has undermined their human dignity. The double standards applied in the debate on the situation in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories are deplorable. We call on the international community to step up efforts to find a lasting solution, by putting an end to the occupation and restoring justice and peace.

The Arab peace initiative, which was proposed in Beirut in 2002 and relaunched in 2007 in Riyadh, can provide a basis for comprehensive peace, including the withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories to the boundary lines of 4 June 1967 and the negotiation of the various issues. Israel’s failure to seize this historic opportunity pushes peace even further out of reach and plunges the region into a catastrophic situation.

In the light of Israel’s daily aggression in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shebaa Farms, we call on the Conference to recommend to the Governing Body to take measures against Israeli practices that violate the principle of decent work.

Similarly, we call on the Director-General to implement the enhanced programme technical cooperation for Palestine, and take the necessary measures to ensure that the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection has sufficient finances. To this end, the Fund should be made known beyond the bounds of the ILO, with a view to attracting new donor States and organization to meet the needs of the tripartite partners in Palestine. While we are aware that the deteriorating situation calls for urgent relief, emergency assistance must not be mistaken for a lasting solution.

Mr. JENNINGS (representative, Union Network International)

UNI Global Union represents the fast-growing services sectors. Our membership is seeing labour markets being transformed, with millions of new jobs being created in knowledge-intensive services sectors.

The ILO this year has transformed sectoral activities, and we are delighted with the new initiative. The ILO will create policy dialogue forums throughout the services sector. We will start with commerce this year and create others covering the issues of finance, information, communications technology, property services and the broader media.

To us, this means that the ILO becomes truly relevant to the labour market of tomorrow. We welcome the Director-General’s admission that we cannot reach sustainable globalization if overall policy direction does not change. It is time to press the delete button on the Washington Consensus.

The jury is on globalization, declining wages and GNP, growing inequity, and the rapacious global

financialization, all of which make the planet's ills worse.

In 2006, record mergers took place, driven by a private equity deal culture which saw the long term as being a couple of years. Not sustaining the planet, but sustaining luxury lifestyles for the few. Businesses were bought and taken off the stock market and regulatory radar into a secret world of value extraction in off-shore tax havens, affecting and impacting the public expenditure plans for governments everywhere.

A leading private equity leader observed last week, "Our office cleaner faces a higher tax rate than private equity". Well, my organization, UNI Global Union represents those cleaners, and we want change. Tomorrow, around the world, we have a UNI Global Action Day to support low-paid cleaners and security guards around the world. The ILO should be leading the campaign to introduce minimum wage rules everywhere.

We endorse the call in the Director-General's Report for a further investigation of the impact on the global economy of private equity and hedge funds. Indeed, we would like to suggest that the ILO should organize a crash course on core labour standards and an ILO multinational declaration for private equity practitioners because, in my discussions with them, they have not got a clue.

We welcome the commitment of the ILO to undertake a major research and policy effort on green jobs. Green jobs and respect for core labour standards go hand in hand. A better carbon footprint, yes, but no stamping on union rights. We welcome this strong G8 message on respecting core labour standards. We consider this a brilliant success for the ILO and the Decent Work Agenda. I would say, Mr. President, that this clears the way for the President of the United States, George W. Bush, now to endorse the Employee Free Choice Act on Capitol Hill. And this will give American workers a real and fair opportunity and chance to join trade unions and to organize themselves into trade unions. And this same message should be addressed to Wal-Mart, to Lidl, to G4S, to Oracle, Dell and IBM, and all those private equity firms should comply with the G8 message and the standards and the core labour standards of the ILO. At UNI Global Union, we have signed 20 global framework agreements with multinational companies and more are on the way. We want the ILO to promote these agreements as the employment ministers did at the G8 during the 30th anniversary celebration of the ILO Declaration on Multinationals.

Finally, we are angry that so many Governments pledge their support here, and do the opposite at home. The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has found the Greek Government guilty of undertaking a coup against pension fund administration in the Greek banking sector. The ILO's decision is clear: bring together the parties, the employees and the bankers, within the framework of collective bargaining. I went to Athens. I met the Minister. He promised to implement the ILO decision, but that promise has not yet been fulfilled. We are dissatisfied that the Government is not treating this with the urgency required. This morning, the Greek Minister of Economy and Finance, Mr. George Alogoskoufis, informed us that the Greek Government's undertakings would be carried out in full at a time of their choosing. I would like to point out that UNI and the ILO are not external factors, as implied

by the Minister. Our message to the Minister is: it is time to act. Our affiliates in UNI consider that there are no grounds for further delay, and a meeting must now take place between the interested parties, as was previously agreed by the Minister. We will be following developments closely.

Finally, we congratulate the Director-General on his excellent Report and on the very skilful way that the ILO has mainstreamed its work throughout the multilateral system.

Mr. BAILEY (*representative, Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations*)

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak on behalf of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, or FICSA. My name is Christopher Bailey. I work in the Knowledge Management Department at the World Health Organization just down the road, I am your neighbour, and presently I am the FICSA Regional Representative for Europe.

Long before I started work at the UN, I had been a member of two trade unions from other professions. Today, I am an international civil servant, a manager and an elected staff representative. I say this because, although I am representing a federation of UN staff associations and unions, I am also an individual hired to do a job that I am passionate about and one that I have a few specialized skills in that might be of use to others.

I would imagine, and I would hope, that everyone in this room could describe themselves similarly.

What is unique about UN organizations and specialized agencies is that we share the same self-selection factor. We are here because we want to help and our skills have been recognized as a potential contribution. It is a great honour and rare privilege. But one thing we have never taken for granted from the inception of the UN system was the basic set of human rights of UN staff to speak freely, to assemble freely and to benefit from a working justice system.

These had to be won by individual staff members of the UN over the years. These people did not face the hardships that many people in this room have faced, but we have struggled in other ways to ensure that the rights of international civil servants are recognized by the international organizations.

We have had some victories, victories that have been inspired by people like you, your colleagues and your predecessors and I would like to express our appreciation to the ILO for the example that is set.

We have all benefited by your struggles from the principle of the eight-hour workday to the prohibition of child labour down the line. Although a staff committee was established as early as 1928 and at the UN secretariat in 1947, yet even with the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), in practise staff associations and unions in the UN have been allowed to practice these and other rights only to varying and limited degrees, based on the level of tolerance of individual administrations.

Establishing these fundamental human rights as rights that UN workers share had to be earned and has been documented through the rich history of ILO cases in the work of FICSA.

But the point is, little by little, person by person, case by case, the basic human rights of assembly, of speech, of due process, had to be won and re-won within the UN itself and can never be taken for granted.

Today, individuals at the UN, staff and managers, find themselves in the labyrinthine system of self-administered justice, of ombudsmen and review panels and appeals boards, a system which more often does not mete out justice, but rather prolongs by years indecision until the participants leave the organization or give up.

How many of us in the UN have experienced or know someone, both staff and managers, whose health and career and effectiveness have been diminished as justice delayed slowly and silently becomes justice denied?

To this end, FISCOSA supports the changes adopted by the UN General Assembly to reform the administration of justice at the UN and would urge other organizations to reform their internal procedures to include mediation and other forms of conflict prevention, but also to provide free legal advice to staff members and managers who are involved in administrative of conflict.

We, at the UN, must remind ourselves of why we are here and why we believe that by giving our talents in the service of others we will benefit others as well as ourselves as part of a dynamic, living, global community and then apply that notion to how we work within the UN and how we organize that work. Put simply, we must practise what we preach.

M^{me} FRANÇOIS (*représentante, Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme*)

La Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, dans le cadre de son programme conjoint avec l'Organisation mondiale contre la torture (OMCT), l'Observatoire pour la Protection des défenseurs des droits de l'homme, exprime sa vive préoccupation quant aux violations par certains Etats de leurs obligations internationales découlant de la Constitution de l'OIT et des conventions n^{os} 87 et 98.

Dans un certain nombre d'Etats, en effet, les défenseurs des droits économiques, sociaux et culturels sont régulièrement victimes d'assassinats, de menaces, de mauvais traitements, d'arrestations ou encore de détentions arbitraires. Les dirigeants syndicaux sont les premières victimes de cette répression, leur engagement pour un meilleur équilibre social et une meilleure répartition des richesses étant souvent considéré comme un obstacle à la croissance économique par de nombreux acteurs.

En Afrique, les défenseurs de la liberté syndicale, qui dénoncent les mauvaises conditions de travail, la corruption, la mauvaise gestion et l'exploitation abusive des ressources naturelles, sont fréquemment confrontés à de sérieuses représailles de la part des autorités.

Ainsi, Monsieur le Président, nous sommes particulièrement préoccupés par la situation à Djibouti, où de nombreux dirigeants syndicaux ont été licenciés, arrêtés et poursuivis judiciairement depuis plusieurs années.

En Guinée-Conakry, une vingtaine de dirigeants syndicaux ont été arbitrairement détenus dans un contexte de grève générale au cours des mois de janvier et février 2007. Nombre d'entre eux ont été passés à tabac à cette occasion.

Au Zimbabwe, les autorités continuent de réprimer tout mouvement social visant à dénoncer la détérioration du niveau de vie et les atteintes aux droits sociaux. Au cours des dix-huit derniers mois, des centaines de dirigeants et militants syndicaux ont ainsi été détenus, interrogés, violemment maltraités, ou encore intimidés par les forces de l'ordre à travers le pays.

En Amérique latine, de nombreux syndicalistes continuent de faire l'objet de harcèlement, de poursuites judiciaires, de mauvais traitements, de tortures voire d'assassinats.

Ainsi, en Colombie, la situation des dirigeants syndicaux reste extrêmement préoccupante, leurs activités continuant d'être stigmatisées et considérées comme subversives. Dernier exemple en date, le 7 février 2007, M^{me} Carmen Cecilia Santana Romana, épouse du premier vice-président de la Centrale unitaire des travailleurs (CUT), a été assassinée à son domicile. Nous avons également recensé de nombreux assassinats de dirigeants syndicaux au Guatemala ou encore récemment au Mexique.

En Asie, malheureusement, la situation n'est pas meilleure, le nombre de cas d'agressions, de menaces, de harcèlement et de détentions arbitraires à l'encontre des syndicalistes et des dirigeants syndicaux étant en constante augmentation.

Il en va ainsi au Cambodge où la plupart des mouvements de grève ont été réprimés en 2006 et plusieurs dirigeants ont été détenus arbitrairement. J'aimerais citer le cas de M. Hy Vuthy assassiné le 24 février 2007. Il était président du Syndicat libre des travailleurs du Cambodge à l'usine Suntex et il a été tué alors qu'il quittait son travail.

En Chine également, les autorités continuent de réprimer de façon quasi systématique toute tentative d'établir des syndicats libres. J'aimerais citer le cas de M. Yao Fuxin, militant de la cause ouvrière dans la province du Liaoning, qui est détenu depuis mars 2002 et qui ne devrait être libéré qu'en mars 2009 alors que ses conditions de détention sont extrêmement précaires.

En Corée du Sud, depuis la promulgation en mars 2006 d'une directive intitulée Directive relative à la transformation des organisations illégales en syndicats légaux, le ministère de l'Administration gouvernementale et de l'Intérieur a durci ses mesures de répression à l'égard de nombreux syndicats, et notamment du Syndicat des fonctionnaires coréens (KGEU).

En Iran, dans un contexte de répression croissante envers les syndicats, les dirigeants syndicaux ne sont pas épargnés. Je citerai juste le cas de M. Mansoor Osanloo, président de l'Union des chauffeurs de la compagnie de bus de Téhéran, qui a passé plus de neuf mois en prison l'an dernier.

Aux Philippines, également, la répression continue notamment par le biais d'assassinats et de violences.

Enfin, concernant la région du Moyen-Orient, j'aimerais mentionner la situation en Egypte où le siège du Centre des services des syndicats et des travailleurs (CTUWS) vient d'être fermé le 22 avril au Caire sur décision administrative.

En Iraq, nous avons également recensés récemment plusieurs assassinats de dirigeants syndicaux.

Face à ce grand nombre de violations des instruments internationaux en matière de droits économiques et sociaux, nous appelons la communauté internationale à œuvrer afin que la liberté syndicale

soit pleinement respectée, et ce en toute circonstance.

Mr. HARRIS (*representative, Education International*)

No one dares to contest today that children should be learning, not working. And we reaffirmed that principle two days ago on “World Day against Child Labour”. But not so long ago, child labour was accepted in many parts of the world and one of the great achievements of the ILO has been to establish that child labour is not acceptable. The ILO plays a key role through IPEC in turning that principle into practice.

Education International (EI) participates with our fellow global union, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF), in a joint industry union foundation to eliminate child labour in the cocoa industry. And that is just one. The EI is also a permanent member of the Global Task Force on Child Labour.

This is practical work. Moving from principle to practice remains the big challenge. Last year’s ILO Report showed that progress had been made but there is still a long way to go and we call on governments to renew their efforts.

The elimination of child labour is closely linked with the campaign to achieve education for all. Yet the latest reports show that many countries are falling short. In just two weeks from now we will be at exactly the half-way point in the 15-year programme to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of primary education for all by the year 2015. Seven-and-a-half years have gone by since the governments of the world made that commitment. Yet the monitoring reports that come in now show that most countries are still far from the half-way mark. There are several reasons for this shortfall.

The first is failure to engage with the social partners at national level. Education unions can contribute mightily. Our members are ready to do so. But too often governments keep them at a distance instead of engaging with them. The second reason is that the conditions of teachers in developing countries are often just appalling. Teachers, too, need decent work so that they can fulfil their vocation and provide quality education. But teachers often have to take extra jobs just so they and their families can survive and the education of the children suffers. The third reason is that there are too many stopgap solutions, engaging unqualified people, the so-called volunteers and the like. Putting a body in front of a group of children is not education. Education is about quality, about basic minimum standards. Fourthly, we need to confront the growing shortage of qualified teachers. UNESCO estimates a shortage of 18 million by 2015 unless major efforts are made to step up training and recruitment. The ILO’s action programme is one contribution, but still a far too small contribution to this effort.

All of these issues – the participation of the social partners, decent working conditions, properly quali-

fied teachers and the looming shortage of teachers – are covered in the important Report presented to this Conference just a week ago by the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel. This Committee has shone a spotlight on the failings of States in each of the areas that I have highlighted.

The facts alone, the expert analysis is presented with great clarity. What more does it take for governments to act? A major issue concerning all States is migration and mobility. The EI understands that the unions are concerned by the impact on our schools and the need for resources and policies which enable schools to respond well to that impact and, secondly, growing migration and mobility within our own profession. The ILO has done valuable work on the rights-based approach to migration. We are urging the OECD, in particular, to draw upon the ILO’s work in its new major policy study on migration.

The EI, like other global unions, will continue to advocate an approach to migration and other issues based on non-discrimination. When we call for respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we mean what we say. We do mean respect for trade union rights. It is time for the Government of Ethiopia, for example, to respect the findings of the ILO’s Committee on Freedom of Association. It is time for trade union rights to be respected in Colombia, in Cambodia, in Myanmar and in many other countries. The previous speaker has just outlined many cases. We mean respect for the rights of women. The message from the ILO Global Report, *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, is clear. We mean non-discrimination on any grounds. We cannot and will not accept discrimination against teachers on the basis of their sexual orientation, as is being proposed right now by a European government whose President was actually scheduled to be here this week.

Finally, Education International is proud to play a key role in the new Council of Global Unions. With the trade union movement, which is on the move, which is mobilizing, we will be constructive and practical. We agree with Philip Jennings’ comments on the ILO’s new approach to sectoral activity, that is to take the ILO agenda into the real world, into the workplace and we will work with governments and employers to achieve that. And we will, in doing that, be steadfast in our determination to defend the principles that underpin the ILO and its role in the international community: justice, equity, respect for rights and firm opposition to all forms of discrimination.

The PRESIDENT

We have concluded the general debate on the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General. Very many thanks to all of you for your contributions.

(*The sitting adjourned at 8.25 p.m.*)

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