

**Twentieth sitting**

Friday, 15 June 2007, 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Sulka

The PRESIDENT

The 20th sitting of this session of the International Labour Conference is called to order. I give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference for an announcement.

**REGISTRATION OF RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL
LABOUR CONVENTIONS BY THE REPUBLIC
OF MONTENEGRO**

THE CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

On 12 June 2007, the Director-General received written confirmation by the Republic of Montenegro of ratifications which had earlier been registered for Serbia and Montenegro, effective as from the date of Montenegrin Independence, 3 June 2006. Registration of ratifications of the following Conventions by Montenegro on that date has been done by the Director-General: the Unemployment Convention, 1919 (No. 2), the Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3), the Unemployment Indemnity (Shipwreck) Convention, 1920 (No. 8), the Placing of Seamen Convention, 1920 (No. 9), the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11), the Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 12), the White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13), the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14), the Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921 (No. 16), the Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention, 1925 (No. 17), the Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention, 1925 (No. 18), the Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925 (No. 19), the Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention, 1926 (No. 22), the Repatriation of Seamen Convention, 1926 (No. 23), the Sickness Insurance (Industry) Convention, 1927 (No. 24), the Sickness Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1927 (No. 25), the Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels) Convention, 1929 (No. 27), the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention (Revised), 1932 (No. 32), the Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45), the Maintenance of Migrants' Pension Rights Convention, 1935 (No. 48), the Officers' Competency Certificates Convention, 1936 (No. 53), the Sickness Insurance (Sea) Convention, 1936 (No. 56), the Certification of Ships' Cooks Convention, 1946 (No. 69), the Medical Examination (Seafarers) Convention, 1946 (No. 73), the Certification of Able Seamen Convention, 1946 (No. 74), the Final Articles

Revision Convention, 1946 (No. 80), the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88), the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89), the Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 90), the Paid Vacations (Seafarers) Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 91), the Accommodation of Crews Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 92), the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), the Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957 (No. 106), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Medical Examination (Fishermen) Convention, 1959 (No. 113), the Fishermen's Articles of Agreement Convention, 1959 (No. 114), the Final Articles Revision Convention, 1961 (No. 116), the Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119), the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 [Schedule I amended in 1980] (No. 121), the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), the Accommodation of Crews (Fishermen) Convention, 1966 (No. 126), the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129), the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), the Holidays with Pay Convention (Revised), 1970 (No. 132), the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), the Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139), the Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140), the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), the Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), the Occupa-

tional Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), the Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

In these circumstances, the date of entry into force of these instruments for the Republic of Montenegro is 3 June 2006.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE APPLICATION OF STANDARDS: SUBMISSION, DISCUSSION AND NOTING

The PRESIDENT

We shall proceed immediately with the submission, discussion and noting of the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

This report consists of three parts which are published in *Provisional Record* No. 22.

I invite the Officers of the Committee to come up and join me on the podium: the Chairperson, Mr. Paixão Pardo, Brazil; the Employer Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Potter, United States; the Worker Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Cortebeeck, Belgium; and the Reporter, Mr. Nkhambule, Swaziland.

I now give the floor to the Reporter, Mr. Nkhambule, to present the report.

Mr. NKHAMBULE (*Government, Swaziland; Reporter of the Committee on the Application of Standards*)

It is a pleasure and indeed an honour to present to the plenary the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards. The Committee held 16 sittings during which it received information from 63 governments on the situation in their countries. The Committee is an organ of the Conference, empowered under article 7 of its Standing Orders, to examine the measures taken by States to implement the Conventions they themselves have ratified voluntarily. It also examines reports submitted by States as part of their constitutional obligations.

The tripartite structure of the Committee makes it a unique forum at the international level to witness social dialogue in action. It is important to recall that the operative mechanism of the Committee's work is oversight through discussion, which is the ILO's hallmark. The Committee works closely with, and to a large extent on, the basis of the report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. The close collaboration between the two Committees is underscored by the customary invitation accepted by the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts to address the Committee.

The report is divided into three parts corresponding to the principal questions dealt with by the Committee. The first part takes up the Committee's discussion on general questions relating to standards and to the General Survey of the Committee of Experts, this year on the eradication of forced labour (Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)). The second part takes up the discussion of the individual cases examined by the Committee and, of course, its conclusions. The third part concerns the special sitting to examine developments concerning the question of the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). Thus, in summary form, I will take up each of these questions in order to recall the main elements of these discussions.

This year the Committee implemented a certain number of changes in its working methods, as rec-

ommended by the tripartite group on working methods of the Conference Committee. The review of the working methods is an ongoing process, which will necessarily require further adjustment over time, and this was the consensus reached at the Committee level. The information session organized for the governments to explain the criteria used in selecting cases brought increased transparency to the work of the Committee. The improvement in time management of the Committee was both palpable and also very encouraging: States were able to come forward to register and all cases were discussed in one week without having to go into a Saturday sitting. However, the work of both this Committee and the Committee of Experts depends on receiving reports when these reports are due, and with a rate of approximately 30 per cent of reports received on time this creates and continues to create serious obstacles to the smooth functioning of the supervisory system. This message was forcefully sent to all governments during our meeting.

The discussion on the two forced labour Conventions highlighted the new, contemporary forms of forced labour set against the background of globalization, as well as strong and weak points concerning the adaptability of international labour standards over time and in changed circumstances. There was, however, general recognition of the relevance of the two Conventions.

In the discussion of individual cases before the Committee, of the 25 cases selected, one was a case of progress in the important field of occupational safety and health. This underscores the pedagogical role of the Committee in providing an international venue to commend States for progress achieved, and for all to learn about "best practice" that may prevail and how this may be adapted to their own circumstances. In this vein, it is particularly noteworthy that the social partners selected their spokespersons for specific cases according to their practical and thematic expertise, thus stimulating the substantive part of oversight through discussion. Ten technical assistance missions were decided by the Committee, and three of these have already been accepted.

The special sitting to examine developments concerning the question of observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), was held pursuant to the resolution adopted by the Conference in the year 2000. The Committee strongly urged the Government to take all necessary measures to give effect to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, and to provide concrete and verifiable evidence in this respect to the Committee of Experts.

One special paragraph concerning the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) by Belarus was included in the Committee's report. While taking note of progress made in respect of some of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, the Committee expressed its concern since these steps were clearly insufficient and did not address the heart of the matter. In order to monitor developments in this regard appropriately, the Committee recommended that the Governing Body reconsider this matter in November 2007.

Special mention is made in the report of the Committee concerning two Governments, the Governments of Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which unfortunately failed to take

part in the discussion concerning their individual cases.

In closing, it has been a great pleasure again this year for me to present the report of the Committee, and I would like to thank the Chairperson, Mr. Sérgio Paixão Pardo, along with the Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, Mr. Edward Potter and Mr. Luc Cortebeeck, respectively for their unparalleled competence, efficiency, spirit of cooperation and sound mind, which has enabled this Committee to carry out its work in the manner it has. I would also like to thank all those that availed their indispensable services to the Committee for it to perform. I have in mind the gallant Ms. Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry and her wonderful team of officials, the interpreters, the technicians and many others who worked behind the scenes unnoticed.

Therefore, I would like to recommend that the Conference adopt the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

Mr. POTTER (*Employer, United States; Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Application of Standards*)

This year, we began our work under the first significant revision of our working methods in 25 years. This followed a year-long process, beginning at the end of the 2006 session of the Conference and involving three meetings with regional representatives of governments through the March 2007 Governing Body. The revised working methods were set out in a consensus document that reflected the views of governments from all regions. Thus, it is not understandable that some governments continue to criticize the working methods, in particular the criteria for selection of cases, in view of the opportunity that every government had to participate directly, or through its regional representatives, in the working methods reform process.

With respect to the criteria to be used to select cases, the working group on working methods concluded that there was no need to change the criteria. Moreover, the Governments concluded that it continued to be appropriate for the Workers and Employers to agree on the list of cases to be discussed.

There were several important changes in the working methods. First, as in 2006, governments were given a preliminary list of cases two weeks prior to the session of the Conference, in order to give them notice that they might appear on the list of cases. Thus, there is no excuse for any government that appeared on this preliminary list not to be prepared and available to present their case.

Second, once the final list was adopted by the Committee, the Worker and Employer spokespersons immediately conducted an informal briefing for governments on the list, and we answered all questions asked. This briefing was announced during the information briefing for the Committee on the first day and is included in our methods of work. It is incumbent on anyone registered in the Committee to follow all aspects of the Committee's work. The timing of adoption of the list should not have been surprising to anyone following the work of the Committee. It was disappointing, therefore, that more governments did not attend the briefing, regardless of whether they were on the list or not.

A third innovation was that governments were given a deadline to register to present their cases. Many countries on the preliminary list took the opportunity to register even before the list of cases was adopted. This is to be commended. Those gov-

ernments that did not register before the deadline were scheduled by the Office to present their cases. This was done in a straightforward way, on an alphabetical order basis. Fortunately, this was needed in only a few cases.

Fourth, an important factor in the Committee finishing its work on time was that the working methods contemplated strict time limits to be set by the Chairperson. Overall, the revised working methods worked very well, compared with the past, allowing the Committee to finish its work without a need to work on the second Saturday – a historic first under the shortened ILO Conference format. But there is always room for improvement. Issues came up during our Committee deliberations which caused the Employers' group to recommend that the consultation process on working methods be continued between the 2007 and 2008 sessions of the Conference.

We consider that a number of issues need further discussion and elaboration. These include, first of all, the criteria for the cases that are on the final adopted list and which were not on the preliminary list. We believe that there is a need for a certain objectivity, fairness and transparency by the governments selected that were not on the preliminary list. Second, there is a need to elaborate on the decorum, civility and respect given to all Committee members when cases are being discussed. This would include making clear the authority of the Chairperson to remove disruptive Committee members and individuals in the gallery from the room. Third, consideration must be given to overall time limits for the discussion of cases. Overall, this did not pose a problem at this year's session, but on the last day we discussed one case for nearly four hours and another for over three hours. If that had been the pattern, we would have needed over 75 hours to discuss all the cases, leaving aside the time to formulate conclusions.

The publication of the preliminary list for the past two years, providing much more transparency in the list development process, has resulted in a more time-consuming process at the beginning of the session of the Conference for the Workers' and Employers' groups in terms of finalizing the list. Presently, the Employers' and Workers' groups are not able to begin their work officially before the session begins. This has the consequence of making it difficult to finalize the list. As a standing committee of the Conference, we see two solutions – either amend the Standing Orders or provide an exception to the Standing Orders to allow the Workers' and Employers' groups to meet officially, in the capacity of the Committee on the Application of Standards, prior to the start of the session to work towards finalizing the list. Either alternative would greatly facilitate the timely finalization of the list of cases and the work of the Committee. This idea should be discussed by the Subcommittee on the Working Methods and ultimately by the Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards of the Governing Body.

The selection of cases will always be a point of contention in our Committee. It is human nature that no person or country likes to be criticized. Except for cases of progress, which is a positive discussion to illustrate and demonstrate the positive outcomes of the supervisory process, it is possible to avoid being listed by meeting the international obligations to comply with ratified Conventions. If

there is a lack of compliance or a lack of progress towards compliance with ratified Conventions, then there is the possibility that a country will be selected. It has always been the situation that the list of cases is composed of both very serious cases and issues of technical compliance. Regional balance, level of development and diversity of subject matter are also factors. With respect to the diversity of cases, for example, the Employers' group would like to see more cases on forced labour, child labour and equal treatment than has been the case in recent years.

The selection of countries is not mathematical, but based on the criteria found in the methods of work. Politics is not and should not be one of the criteria. At the same time, the Committee is not a Geneva mailbox. Implementation is best achieved locally and voluntarily. Even in serious cases, if steady, real and meaningful progress is being made locally to comply with ratified Conventions, then discussion of a case is not required in our Committee every year. Tripartite solutions locally or here in Geneva are one means of taking concrete steps to implement ratified Conventions. The reality is that we can discuss only 25 cases each year, which highlights the need to discuss the cases where it will do the most good. Other important cases will get overlooked if we do not take this approach, as was illustrated this year by the case of the Philippines.

There are hundreds of possible cases that could be on the list but we must make a selection, and the selection is not mathematical. There is subjectivity involved and reasonable people, dealing in good faith, can disagree. The list is not unilaterally decided by one group or the other. The final list of cases does not include six cases that the Employers' group would have liked to see on the list. The list also included cases that we did not think would lead to a productive result, and our Committee's results in those cases proved to be correct.

It is most regrettable that the Workers' group chose, in the last meeting of the Committee, to attack the Employers' group about the composition of the list of cases and in effect, challenge our good faith and integrity. As the spokesperson of the Employers' group in the Committee on the Application of Standards, I take the comments personally. The effective protection of workplace human rights, as reflected by the eight core ILO standards, is a cornerstone of how I approach workplace issues every day.

I exceptionally agreed without future precedent that the Workers' group's spokesperson could have an expanded discussion about Colombia, which is reflected in the first part of the Committee's report as part of the discussion leading to the adoption of the list. This was to avoid a double discussion of the case in the Committee and in the Conference itself. This good will, in our view, was violated. Normally, countries that are not on the adopted list of cases are never discussed in the detail that the Worker spokesperson was permitted with respect to Colombia. The insult to the Employers' group on the last day, and the factual errors in the Colombia description, make clear to us now that our acquiescence was a mistake – one that will not happen again in the future.

No one disputes that Colombia is a serious case. But one size solutions do not fit all circumstances. Our goal is the implementation of a ratified treaty in

law and practice. This is the objective of the Committee.

The usual means by which we deal with serious cases is through dialogue in our Committee. For over 20 straight years, the Committee tried dialogue in the Colombia case with limited results. That is, the Employers' group acquiesced to the Workers' strategy for over 20 years. Following the Government's agreement in June 2005 to agree to a high-level tripartite visit, more positive developments have occurred in the country in the last two years than in the prior 20 years of discussion, including the establishment of a permanent ILO presence in Colombia.

From the Employers' perspective, why would we abandon a strategy that was gathering momentum? Even though there was no formal Colombia discussion this year, the Government has made numerous other positive commitments at this Conference that seek to increase protection of trade union leaders and to increase prosecution and judicial resources. The use and strengthening of tripartite structures will continue as well.

Unfortunately, we need to discuss briefly the Convention No. 29 case concerning Japan. Although the Committee of Experts continues to provide observations in reaction to the comments of others, it was in 2003 that the Experts wrote, in its final 15-page report on this case, that there was nothing more the ILO or the supervisory machinery can do about this serious matter in history. There is no continuing violation or likelihood that the circumstances will occur in the future and there is nothing the ILO itself can do now. For these reasons, it is not appropriate for this case to be put before our Committee.

We would like to call the attention of the Conference to the discussions held in relation to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Myanmar, Belarus, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since 1995, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has demonstrated over and over again that it does not understand the need to implement its international obligations under Convention No. 87 in law or in practice. Both in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and here in the Conference, the Government shows its disdain for Employer representatives, including the overall leader of the Employers' group, in this plenary.

Freedom is essential to employers and workers. In our view, the situation of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Production Associations (FEDECAMERAS) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is at the same level of significance as the circumstances of the Solidarność trade union in the 1980s in Poland. The rights enshrined in Convention No. 87 apply with equal force in both authoritarian and democratic societies.

The atmosphere during the discussion of this case created by a minority of Committee members lacked the civility and respect that our parliamentary dialogue calls for. The organized tyranny of the minority, including those in the gallery, is unacceptable and should not obscure the Government's utter failure to comply with Convention No. 87.

This year, the Committee discussed the application of Convention No. 87 by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the light of serious deficiencies in its respect for freedom of association and, in particular, the protection of civil

liberties and non-interference in employers' and workers' organizations.

This year's conclusions by the Committee are very strong. With regard to favouritism and the lack of impartiality to certain favoured workers' and employers' organizations and the creation of parallel organizations, the Committee urged the Government to refrain from any form of interference with workers' and employers' organizations and to comply with Article 3 of Convention No. 87.

Moreover, the Committee deplored the fact that the leader of FEDECAMARAS had not been given permission to leave the country to participate in this Conference. The Committee called on the Government to take measures to investigate the violence, vandalism and ransacking of the headquarters of FEDECAMARAS so that those responsible could be punished and so that similar events would not occur in the future.

The special sitting on the application of Convention No. 29 with respect to Myanmar makes clear that there remains a substantial gap in that country's commitment to abolish forced labour in law and practice. The recent supplementary understanding with the ILO does not address the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, nor the underlying implementation issues. Concrete action to abolish and eliminate forced labour is required of the Government immediately.

With regard to Belarus and its application of Convention No. 87, the Committee took due note of progress made in respect of some of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations. There remain serious gaps between the Government's actions and the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, however. As a consequence, the Committee decided to include this case in a special paragraph but not as a continued failure to implement, in view of the new attitude of the Government.

Although both Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not appear before the Committee, both cases were considered and placed in special paragraphs. The case of Zimbabwe was the most reprehensible snub of the Committee. Zimbabwe refused to appear before the Committee to discuss its continued serious failures to comply with Convention No. 87, although a delegation was attending the Conference. This action is to be deplored since the Government representatives sat in the gallery while the case was being discussed.

In closing, I would like to thank the Office for its excellent support in the development of our work, in particular, Ms. Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, and Ms. Karen Curtis and their staff. We could not succeed without them. I would also like to thank Mr. Sérgio Paixão Pardo for his excellent leadership as Chairperson of the Committee and the thoughtful contributions of Mr. Jinno Nkhambule as the Reporter of the Committee. In particular, I want to thank Mr. Luc Cortebecq, Worker spokesperson, for his continued collaboration and good will.

I would also like to thank the Employers' group, especially my colleagues Ms. Sonia Regenbogen, Mr. Vic van Vuuren, Mr. Peter Anderson, Mr. Roberto Suarez, Mr. Thomas Prinz and Mr. Juan Mailhos for helping me to prepare and present several individual cases.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Ms. Maria Paz Anzorreguy of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and Mr. Christian Hess of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) for their

ongoing support before, during and after this Conference.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I reaffirm the Employers' group's continued support of the ILO supervisory machinery. We support this report without reservation.

Original French: Mr. CORTEBEECK (Worker, Belgium; Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Application of Standards)

I would like to begin my statement by thanking all those who have contributed to the smooth functioning and the success of our Committee this year.

First of all, I wish to thank the members of the Workers' group for their cooperation and their constructive and relevant involvement, particularly Khursheed Ahmed, our Secretary, and Gahé Basile Mahan, Pepe Pinson and Raquel Garrido, our Vice-Chairpersons.

I would also like to thank the colleagues who helped me with the presentation of certain cases, Stan Gacek, Alison Tate, Annie Van Wezel and Simon Steyne.

Particular thanks to the supreme guide of our group over a number of years, Tom Etty, who has just participated in his last Conference.

Thanks, too, to our coordinators, Janek Kuczkiwicz and Véronique Rousseau, as well as our guides from ACTRAV, Claude Akpokavie and, in particular, Monique Cloutier, who was with us for the last time.

Thanks to Mr. Potter and the other members of the Employers' group for their collaboration and their desire to reach suitable conclusions, even if this year it has not been an easy matter.

I would also like to thank the Government representatives for having engaged with us in dialogue on the application of standards in their countries.

Thank you to Mr. Sérgio Paixão Pardo of the Government of Brazil, our Chairperson, as well as to Mr. Jinno Nkhambule, our Reporter, for their dedication to our Committee.

Thanks also to the ILO services, in particular the International Labour Standards Department, Ms. Doumbia-Henry and Ms. Karen Curtis and their team. Thanks, of course, to the interpreters and translators. Without them, the discussion in our Committee would never have taken place.

Once again this year our Committee had an enriching exchange of opinions thanks to one of the best General Surveys that we have seen over the past few years. The Conventions on forced labour are among the ILO instruments which are the most frequently ratified and the most relevant. Our now annual special sitting on Burma is proof of the fact that forced labour and slavery continue to exist, sometimes in new contexts linked to kidnapping, debt servitude, debt bondage or trafficking for the purpose of exploitation. Victims desperately need more effective protection, and in particular guaranteed access to justice.

At the same time, forced labour is taking on new forms in the industrialized countries, be it prison labour, work to be carried out in order to be eligible for unemployment benefit, unpaid overtime hours and bans on striking. These modern forms mean that social legislation needs to be brought up to date.

This year our Committee also dealt with the report of the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations con-

cerning Teaching Personnel. This ninth report reflects once again the gap between statements and reality. Statements reiterate the vital role of education and training, whereas in reality there is a growing shortage of teaching personnel because of increased migration, the ravages of HIV/AIDS and also a lowering of the level of skills in the profession. This shortage of teaching personnel certainly represents the principal obstacle to achieving the objective of education for all.

As is customary, we have devoted the majority of our time and energy to the examination of individual cases. This year, the debates were even more animated than usual; I would like to make a few comments on this point.

Following criticism by certain governments on the working methods of our Committee, the Office, in agreement with the Employers' and Workers' groups, sent out a preliminary list of about 40 potential cases for the second time and 15 days before the beginning of the Conference, an information session was organized for the governments for the first time. Sending out the list early has already shown its advantages and disadvantages. Countries concerned can prepare themselves better and the work of the second week can be better organized. However, some governments continue, nevertheless, to schedule their cases at the end of the week. Others prepare for the Conference by carrying out lobbying so as not to be on the final list. We must look into how to avoid such prohibitive approaches.

Establishing the final list was particularly difficult this year. We would have liked to have seen still further cases discussed, that of Costa Rica for example, for the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). No progress has been made since last year in spite of the promises of the Government. That case should be discussed following the examination of the mission report by the Committee of Experts.

Other cases are still of concern, that of Burma for the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), Bangladesh for Convention No. 98, Pakistan for Convention No. 87, Egypt for Convention No. 87, and Chad also for Convention No. 87.

Finally, there is the case of Japan for the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). Once again, there was no discussion on this because of lack of agreement between the social partners. The Workers' group is deeply disappointed following recent statements by the Prime Minister denying the existence of a system of sexual slavery imposed by the Japanese army, claiming that the victims were never forced to prostitute themselves. Next year, the Workers' group will confirm its determination to discuss this case.

But the real stumbling block this year has been the case of Colombia. Indeed the Workers' group could not understand and will never understand why Colombia was not on the list. If there is one case which fully responds to the criteria to be on the list, it is that of Colombia. There is no possible comparison given the number of unionists assassinated last year (72), given the total impunity for the physical and intellectual perpetrators of these killings and also given the dismantling of social dialogue, of the exercise of union rights – without even mentioning the right to strike.

The stance of being an anti-union State has been confirmed recently by revelations on the links be-

tween members of the Government and military or paramilitary, and moreover on the financing of the paramilitary by economic and financial groups. In the past few months, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) reported to the CFA what it considers to be irrefutable proof of the complicity of senior figures in the administrative department of security with the paramilitary. This complicity relates in particular to these senior figures making available to the paramilitary lists of unionists, several of whom were subsequently murdered. These practices resulted in hundreds, even thousands of deaths including the 2,515 unionists assassinated in Colombia over the past 21 years.

The permanent representation of the ILO in Bogotá, responsible for implementing the tripartite agreement of 2006, is not working, or at least not properly, among other things because of a lack of resources. It is urgent that a high-level mission be sent to enable the Governing Body to assess the situation in November 2007. With a great deal of creativity a way was found. But I would reiterate on behalf of the Workers' group that we will never accept socially, from the union point of view or morally Colombia not being on the list of cases. Nevertheless, we supported the list of cases so as not to still further compromise the spirit and the mechanisms of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

We have thus examined 25 cases plus one. We reached suitable conclusions in the majority of cases. Indeed, our conclusions broadly correspond to the gravity of the case and for its evolution.

First of all, we had our now traditional special sitting on Burma for continued violations of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

Then we reserved a special paragraph each for three countries: Belarus and Zimbabwe under Convention No. 87; Zimbabwe also given its deliberate absence from our Committee. The third paragraph was for the Democratic Republic of the Congo given its absence from the Committee.

Direct contacts missions are foreseen for three countries: Cambodia, Djibouti and Ethiopia because of serious violations of freedom of association.

A high-level mission is to go to five countries: Belarus, Philippines and Turkey on the basis of Convention No. 87, Guatemala on the basis of Convention No. 98, and Bangladesh on the basis of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

Technical assistance should be granted to five countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Romania.

We are awaiting reforms or follow-up reports from 11 countries: Argentina, Australia, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, China, Gabon, India, Italy, Japan, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom and United States.

Finally, last year we introduced an exemplary case of progress for inclusion on the list. This year Spain was our case of progress for occupational safety and health.

I would have liked to conclude with this positive point if we had not unfortunately had to witness a disagreeable and misplaced mediatization of certain cases for national purposes. Some happy that they had been able to keep their country off the list, concluding that there was therefore nothing for which to reproach their country; others accusing their so-

cial partners of manoeuvring in order to blacken their country. We would call upon all parties to refrain from communiqués, accusations or congratulations of this nature.

As to the Workers' group, we remain committed to the tripartite standards system. We are convinced of the importance of the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards at the heart of the ILO. Thus, we hope that true dialogue in our Committee will in future encourage all governments to understand how viable and valid solutions may be identified.

I would call upon you to approve the report of our Committee.

Original Portuguese: Mr. PAIXÃO PARDO (Government, Brazil; Chairperson, Committee on the Application of Standards)

First of all, I would like to thank the members of the Committee for showing confidence in Brazil to lead the work of the Committee. I am not going to mention what has been commented on so brilliantly by previous speakers, but I would like to outline the progress that we have achieved as regards our working methods.

Consultations to improve our methods made it possible to establish a preliminary list of cases which was officially circulated on 15 May, facilitating the preparation of a schedule for activities and enabling governments to register earlier. People who have worked on the Committee for a long time recognize the importance of this progress. We were also pleased with the information session organized by the Vice-Chairpersons shortly after the cases were selected, explaining the reasons why each had been chosen.

On the list of this year we only had seven OECD countries, eight from Asia and Oceania, five from Africa and three from Latin America. There is no magic formula for a perfect balance. As was said in the Committee, standards can be improved to strengthen the system.

We have noted that the conclusions of the Committee have become clearer, more objective and more concise, but we need to have a better balance between the themes to ensure that our Committee does not become an extension of other supervisory bodies of the Organization.

We do have one recommendation. The debates in the Committee reflect national situations and sometimes they are over-emotional. We should have clear, more objective aims in selecting our cases. We should stay within objective thematic limits without imposing political issues or ideological pressures. But, above all, we should be courteous and show mutual respect, thereby strengthening tripartism.

To paraphrase the Committee's conclusions, standards have their own life, and we need to strengthen them. The benefits from the point of view of well-being and justice are incalculable.

I would like to thank the Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, Mr. Potter and Mr. Cortebeek, and our Reporter, Mr. Nkhambule, along with Ms. Doumbia-Henry, Ms. Curtis and all the support team. I would like to thank also the different members of the Committee and I encourage the Conference to adopt our report.

The PRESIDENT

I now suspend the 20th sitting so that we may prepare to welcome our distinguished guest, His

Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka.

(The sitting adjourned at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.)

The PRESIDENT

The general discussion of the report is now open.

Mr. SAHA (*Worker, India*)

I have to convey the grave concern of Indian workers about the rapid erosion of the nobility and values of ILO standards under the onslaught of imperialist globalization.

In the debate on the General Survey concerning the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the participants painfully observed that, instead of eradication, forced labour has been emerging in new forms. For example, with the connivance of authorities, prisoners are made to work for private enterprises, both inside and outside the prisons, and to produce high-value commodities in many countries. Shockingly, in many cases, the prison administration has been contracted out to private parties. Trafficking in women and children and the running of prostitution has developed as organized transnational crimes, and the victims are nothing but forced labour. The inhuman poverty level of the hungry workers can be gauged from the fact that more than half of the world live on less than US\$2 per day. The situation is further aggravated due to the growing casualization of employment and the massive engagement of very poorly paid contract labour. ILO standards are totally unavailable to these workers.

The debate of the last two weeks on individual country cases has testified to the fact that the core and fundamental instruments of the ILO – the right to association, the right to collective bargaining, equal remuneration, etc. – are violated globally. Respect for ILO standards is trampled underfoot by the employers, in collusion with the governments.

Even the industrialized and rich countries, including the United States, are simply denying ratifying the core Conventions of the ILO. In order to transfer the burden of the crisis of capitalism to the shoulders of the workers, the rights and concessions earned by the working class, through the struggles and sacrifices of years, are systematically withdrawn. Attacks on the rights of workers and denying decent compensation have become the mechanism to retain profit by transnational companies of all origins in the face of the crisis faced by capitalism. The united resistance of the working class to change the policies of capitalist globalization is the need of the hour, and talk of acquiring fairness in globalization can be nothing but a futile exercise because there is nothing fair in the ongoing neo-colonial globalization designed for the survival of capitalist imperialism.

I would like to recall that the exclusion of Colombia from the list of individual cases for examination, at the insistence of the Government and employers combined, ran the risk of undermining the credibility of the ILO's supervisory system itself all over the world when there was serious state-sponsored violence on the trade union movement killing 72 workers, 52 cases of arbitrary detention in prison and massive threats and intimidation.

Lastly, I would like to mention that the ILO is shifting from its mandate to further the cause of

workers, as evidenced by the inclusion on the agenda of the "Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises" in the current session of the International Labour Conference. Moreover, from the presentation made to the Workers' group, it was clear that, in the name of "one leader; one programme; one budgetary framework and one Office" under the scheme of UN reform, the ILO is poised to lose its tripartite entity and mandate for the protection of workers.

The working class of the world must come forward united to squarely defeat the design to derail the ILO from its original mandate to be in the service of labour and defeat the mechanism to hijack the ILO for the sole services of capital.

Mr. SHEPARD (*Government, United States*)

I would like to be very clear that I am making this statement on behalf of the 38 industrialized market economy countries of IMEC.

IMEC fully endorses the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards. IMEC has always supported improvements to the Committee on the Application of Standards' methods of work that will enhance its transparency, its efficiency and its effectiveness and thus enhance its credibility as a critical component of the ILO's supervisory system. We therefore appreciate the efforts of the tripartite working group that was established during the 2006 session of the Conference to facilitate both productive discussions and the most effective use of the limited time available to the Committee. In particular, IMEC welcomed the scheduling changes that allowed the entire second week to be devoted to the examination of individual cases and the introduction of speaking time limits, which were, for the most part, faithfully respected. Yet the Committee still regrettably lost a lot of time simply because meetings did not begin at their scheduled time.

IMEC also welcomes the distribution, for the second year, of a preliminary list of cases, and the addition this year of an information session for governments on how the list was arrived at. We hope that, in the future, cases of progress will be clearly distinguished in the list of cases. We also hope that the information session can be scheduled so as to permit the widest possible participation.

IMEC is of the view that the working group should continue to meet both to assess the changes to the Committee's methods of work that were introduced this year and to look for further possible improvements. For example, IMEC believes that the criteria for the selection of individual country cases are fundamentally sound, recognizing that the development of the list of cases cannot be a purely mathematical process. Nonetheless, we consider that the working group should examine additional criteria for determining under what circumstances it would be appropriate to add a country that was not on the preliminary list of cases.

The working group should also review the parameters for discussing a case in which the relevant government refuses to appear. It is a cause for serious concern when a government disregards and disdains the Committee's procedures.

The purpose of the Committee on the Application of Standards is not essentially to criticize or to sanction; rather, our common objective is to explore, with utmost respect and in the spirit of dialogue, significant issues regarding the application of ratified Conventions.

In conclusion, the growing number of ratifications, particularly of the fundamental Conventions, has had a profound impact on the workload of the Committee of Experts and the International Labour Standards Department.

The effectiveness of the Office in supporting the ILO supervisory system has a direct bearing on the credibility of the Organization as a whole. We therefore call, once again, upon the Director-General to fill vacancies on the Committee of Experts without delay, and to ensure that the essential work of the International Labour Standards Department is among his highest priorities.

Original Spanish: Mr. PALACIO BETANCOURT (Government, Colombia)

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude and appreciation to all of the Workers' delegates, the Employers' delegates, the various governments and, of course, the ILO staff.

I would particularly like to express my appreciation to all of the delegates from my country, be they workers, employers or observers from Colombia.

I would like to begin my statement by saying how much I appreciated the words that we heard from Mr. Trotman, the Worker spokesperson, last Monday, 11 June, here in this very room.

He said, and I quote: "the Workers' group wishes on this occasion to recommit itself to the ILO, to its mandate, its principles, its programme and indeed its efforts".

He also said that there have been attempts to compromise the supervisory mechanisms of the ILO and to devalue their relevance. In some incidences, he said, governments insult or disregard the institution.

He went on to say that these efforts to insult or to disregard the institution and its rules could create important weaknesses which, left unattended, could lead to a depreciation in the respect given worldwide for the ILO, for its structures and for its values.

The Government of Colombia fully shares these statements made by Mr. Trotman, the Worker spokesperson, when he took the floor last Monday.

However, we do want to emphasize that there was a lack of consistency between the statements made by the Workers here in this room and some activities that were undertaken during the course of the meetings of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

Here, I would like to give two or three specific examples. Reference was made by Mr. Trotman to the need to have respect. Respect for whom? Respect for the other social partners, the other Government delegates, employers, the rules, the procedures?

In the case of respect for the other social partners, we heard the statement made by the Employers' delegate, Mr. Potter, when he said that the Employers felt that their good faith had been attacked.

The Government of Colombia would also like to say that it felt that its good faith had been attacked, that there was a lack of respect for the role that we, as a government, play in the Committee on the Application of Standards, as I will explain.

This lack of respect to which I refer, I use merely as an example. One basic rule is not to raise issues that are not part of the discussion or the cases that are being examined. This is a basic rule of the rules of play that are established in this institution.

Another basic rule, for example, is not to make false statements, and the only way to move forward and be constructive is to respect these basic rules.

However, the case of Colombia was not on the list, and here I am reading from the minutes of 12 June where it says, with regard to the fact that Colombia is not on the list: "It had nonetheless been possible to debate on the situation in Colombia, while desperately lacking formal conclusions on the case", as stated by the Workers and recorded in the minutes.

May I also say that in an official document from the Colombian trade union federations, it is stated that the situation in Colombia was discussed and, listen to this, without the Government having an opportunity to respond, given that according to the procedure, this can only be the case if, during the discussion of other cases on the list, when dealing with the cases of other countries, the Workers who take the floor refer to the Colombian case.

This is a clear lack of respect for the basic rules that should govern the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards and more generally institutional procedures of the ILO.

I could give many other examples, for example, false statements that the State is an anti-union State. Were the State anti-union, over the course of four or five years we would not have had labour ministers who had risen from the ranks of the trade unions. They would not have agreed to be labour ministers if the Government had been totally anti-union. Also, it would be difficult to believe that the leaders of trade union federations would have signed agreements with employers, workers and the Government to increase the minimum wage in the last four years.

I know Colombian trade union leaders well. I know of their dignity and that they would not have sat down to discuss, to negotiate, and, less still, to sign agreements with a mafia State. The State and the Government of Colombia are entirely legal. They received an almost 80 per cent approval rating in public polling throughout the country, and an almost 80 per cent popularity rating.

I would like to say on behalf of the Government of Colombia that we believe in the ILO, we believe in the institution, the legitimacy of its delegates, all delegates, the legitimacy and respectability of Employer delegates and workers. The Government of Colombia has respected the procedures and the rules of play that were established here and has shown respect for the other social partners. We support the Employers' delegates when they say that they felt that their good faith had been attacked. We also felt that our good faith had been attacked.

We reiterate our belief that there is a need to strengthen the tripartite agreement. We believe in the importance of the presence and the collaboration of the ILO through the work of the Office that is now operating in Colombia. We believe in the capacity of Colombian institutions, including of course the trade unions, which are broad, viable partners of the Government of Colombia. This was reaffirmed in a letter from the Government of Colombia which was recently sent by the President of the Republic to Mr. Somavia. The Government of Colombia will continue to make all the necessary efforts to ensure that the tripartite agreement will continue to function and that the case of Colombia will, as it is now, continue to be a case that is developing in a positive direction.

Lastly, the Government of Colombia wishes the minutes to clearly show our disagreement and that there are many statements, many statements that have been made here in this room, such as the one I have just given. For example, I want to emphasize the statement made by the Workers' delegate of India who said that the Colombian Government was sponsoring the murder of trade unionists. I would like to tell him once again of my certainty that the Colombian trade union representatives would not get together with the President of Colombia ten or 12 times a year if the Government sponsored the murder of trade unionists.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat and recall something I said when I spoke before the plenary: we need courage to denounce, but we need much more courage, much more creativity and much more intelligence to be able to build.

Original Spanish: Mr. CARVALLO (Government, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

I do not wish to give rise to an unnecessary debate, since we believe that it has been clearly demonstrated by the work of this Committee that the accusations levelled against us are false. I would, however, like to make a few final comments for the record, particularly with regard to the ongoing efforts of one sector of the Employers' group to try and sully the image of my Government. If there is one thing that my delegation can be proud of at this session of the Conference, it is that we have played a leading role in a debate which we believe is particularly important in the history of this Committee.

The case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a clear example of the systemic problems from which this Organization suffers. With the ardent support of a large number of countries, starting with those from our own region, my country laid bare a number of the problems which we face here: selectivity, prejudice, double standards, and obvious and shameful politicization. We started this battle and we won, through debate. We did not win through a publicity campaign.

Before this session of the Conference the Employers' group met in Caracas and condemned our country in advance, enjoying in our country the full freedom of speech which it subsequently demanded the absence of. Once again, in Geneva, the group continued to make public accusations against my Government, but all this collapsed in the face of a wall of resistance when the time came for serious, justifiable arguments within the Committee. Furthermore, after examination of our case, based on a technical error in the draft report which we now see has been corrected, our Government was accused of having attacked the headquarters of an employers' organization. These accusations are continuing, and it seems that the Employer representative must have been present at a completely different meeting in some kind of parallel world. It is now being intimated in the so-called recommendations, that the very many countries who took the floor to support us and will probably continue to support us in the future should have their right to speak restricted. Support and enthusiasm are being confused with tumult. Who is really offending this Conference? You, with your cynical recommendations, are offending the more than 30 Government and Worker representatives who have supported us at this session. Mr. Potter spoke of a tumultuous minority, a phrase often used by the Right in Venezuela. So, we

would ask once again, who is really violating the principles of this Conference?

As far as the comparison with solidarity is concerned, it seems that we really have moved into the realms of fiction. Allow me to remind Mr. Potter that the case for including Venezuela on the definitive list was at no time a request from the Workers' group, and that Mr. Jaruzelski never won 12 consecutive, legitimate elections.

To return to the world of reality, we wish to say that, in thus expressing our views, we do not feel alone. Over the last few days both the non-aligned movement and GRULAC have sent a number of communications to the Conference, drawing attention to the grave systemic problems which undermine the work of this Committee.

Members of the International Organisation of Employers, high authorities of the ILO, please listen to the voices of more than 100 countries who have made these public declarations saying "enough is enough". This Organization needs to turn away from a geopolitical agenda. We need to turn decent work into a reality. We need to place this Organization in the service of our peoples. We need to hear the majority calling for radical change in the way that this Organization works.

Mr. CHIPAZIWA (*Government, Zimbabwe*)

Thank you, Mr. President. I should like to commence by briefly responding to the summary presentation by the Chairperson of the Employers' group on the case involving my country.

Mr. President, we utterly reject the statement that our decision not to appear before the Committee was reprehensible in any manner or form. That characterization, coming as it did from an Employer, whose country has ratified the least number of ILO Conventions, and in which collective bargaining and the right to organize are not assured, simply beggars belief.

We draw no useful message of good faith for engagement from such an extraordinary statement. I wonder which is more reprehensible – the non-ratification or simply the decision not to engage in soiled contacts.

Mr. President, my delegation should like now to commend you for your sterling stewardship of this Conference which is now nearing its successful conclusion. We should also like to commend the Director-General and his staff for facilitating our gathering this year. I shall now proceed to make a contribution to the exchanges on the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

It is now common knowledge, Mr. President, that Zimbabwe decided not to appear before the said Committee this year on what would have been the sixth consecutive time. Our decision not to appear was reached after a thorough, I repeat, "thorough" examination of the processes which lead to the listing of a member State. We have lost faith in a system which in part resembled an auction at which the powerful bid on which of their charges should be chastised for whatever transgression they deem fit.

Genuine violators of workers' rights go free because they belong to the favoured column. We do not seek to curry favour ourselves with any of these self-appointed paragons of labour practices. Our position not to appear will be reviewed as soon as the working methods of the Committee have been completely overhauled and democratized. Accordingly, Mr. President, my Government supports fully

the Non-Aligned Movement Minister of Labour's declaration calling for the revision of the working methods of this Committee.

Mr. President, during our consecutive appearances since 2002, we have submitted that the International Labour Conference cannot, and should not, be the forum to deliberate on the political system of any Member, including ours. We abhor this growing tendency to politicize the work of the International Labour Office. This Office should not become the court of first instance for labour disputes. Yet, this is now the course of action of first choice for too many labour centres. We, therefore, stand on principle when we openly declare our position not to become a party to this trend, which can only drag our cherished Office into disrepute.

Mr. President, decolonization was a serious blow to the egos of former colonizers. It is they who now team up to seek to reverse decisions of sovereign Members of this august body on issues other than labour at forums such as the International Labour Conference. This is the only interpretation to be drawn from the unprincipled perennial listing of Zimbabwe. Those policies such as that on the restoration of Zimbabwe's land to its indigenous majority, are irreversible, for they pertain to our sovereignty and our hallowed birthright, our precious land and the stupendous reaches beneath it.

Zimbabwe is at total peace with its neighbours and any challenges it faces will be resolved in consultations at the African, regional and continental levels.

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to reiterate the highest esteem in which my Government holds the International Labour Office. We join those Members who seek to augment the Office's reputation and add to its competencies in resolving those labour matters which are within its remit. We will also continue to engage the Office on all legitimate labour matters and those technical aspects included in the report of the Committee of Experts. Likewise, genuine and willing trade union centres in Zimbabwe will find a ready interlocutor in their legitimate Government so that together we can address the socio-economic challenges which are within the purview of the tripartite negotiating forum. I thank you, Mr. President.

Original German: Ms. ENGELEN-KEFER (Worker, Germany)

I would like to speak about the comments made by the Government representative of Colombia. First and foremost, I would like to express our full support for our group's spokesperson, Mr. Cortebecq. I think he is an excellent Worker representative, and when he gave the clear Workers' view about the serious violations of labour rights in Colombia, he did this on behalf of the Workers and of those who are directly concerned and must do their utmost to bring an end to the serious violations of labour rights.

I consider this was a particularly bitter experience, speaking as the person who sees this from a different point of view in the Committee on Freedom of Association of the Governing Body. For more than ten years now, there have been cases involving attacks against the physical integrity and life of workers; thousands of unionists have been killed and many have disappeared. And for this reason, the spokesperson of the Workers' group has our full support and it is our responsibility to submit this to the Conference Committee.

I cannot understand if the Employer spokesperson, Mr. Potter, feels this to be personally offensive, or if the Government of Colombia feels it to be a violation of procedure. All I can say is that we were shocked that Colombia was not dealt with in the appropriate manner and that we have the duty, in spite of this, to carry on with our work constructively, precisely to ensure that this important procedure of the ILC is being maintained.

Furthermore, the Indian Worker was criticized for saying that, in Colombia, the Government is involved in attacks against unions, and even murder. I think I can support this, and this is what we keep seeing in the Committee on Freedom of Association. There are paramilitary groups that act against the unions only because they are involved with legitimate unions. And we have seen recently an example where unions who have done nothing other than defend the interests of workers in normal labour disputes, that is trying to defend working conditions, were targeted by paramilitary groups. They have been declared to be at high risk, and clear evidence is provided in official documents. Thus, I feel that the Indian worker was quite right and that shows how difficult the situation in Colombia still is. It would therefore be useful for the Organization to deal with this case if it is in a position to do so.

I am very happy that Luc Cortebecq, in his introductory statement, was so clear about the treatment of this issue. I think that we all have to make a contribution. We have to be open and discuss the problems, if we are to create a situation where there is justice, where workers' complaints can really be dealt with and where appropriate sanctions can be imposed so that the issues can be dealt with and a climate can be created in Colombia where unions can go about their perfectly normal union business in peace, without attacks against the workers.

Original Spanish: Mr. FUNES DE RIOJA (Employer, Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group)

I have requested the floor to refer to two questions which have been raised in the course of the presentation of the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards.

First of all, I would like to make some clarifications in respect of the statement made by the distinguished representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

I have no intention, nor have the Employers ever had any intention, of sullyng the image of any government, whatever government that may be. Our mission is one of employer policy within the framework of the ILO. Therefore we do not engage in politics, nor are we going to. We do not want to criticize the institutions of any republic and we respect the Constitutions of all countries.

Secondly, I would like to state that it was not part of the Employers' group that spoke, or which supported Mr. Potter's position. It was the entire group of Employers, with the full support of the IOE. It is therefore not a question of quantity but of quality. It was the Employers' group of the Governing Body of which I am Chairperson, just as I am the Vice-Chairperson of the IOE.

Yes, we were in Caracas, and we were delighted the IOE was able to convene a meeting and that we were able to express our views clearly and freely. I would ask the Government representative to pass on our appreciation of this fact.

At no point in my statement, or in anyone else's, was any reference made to raids, but rather to points that you have raised. I made this clear in the plenary when I exercised the right of reply to the Minister's statement, when he was obviously somewhat confused. First of all, he got my name wrong. I have made that clear. He called me Jesus de Rioja, when my name is Daniel Funés de Rioja. Secondly, he got the statement wrong. We spoke of harassment, not raids. Third, we are not attacking the institutions of the Republic. We are just calling for respect of and compliance with Convention No. 87 of the ILO, which guarantees workers and employers, without distinction, the freedom to organize and to express their views freely. This implies the right of association and the right of expression and action.

I reject any suggestion that the recommendations voiced by our spokesperson, Mr. Potter, and which I endorse, were in any way cynical. As regards the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we have our ears open. And with our ears open, we have asked the Committee on the Application of Standards and the Officers of the Governing Body, as well as in my statement in the plenary on the 11th of this month, that the ILO send a high-level mission to restore social dialogue and ensure compliance with Convention No. 87. This is in no way a conspiracy or an attack on the dignity of the State, but rather an attempt to re-establish some kind of institutional relationship.

I would also like to refer to another matter, specifically a case involving the Republic of Colombia. I would like to say that we are surprised that the rules of procedure are not being respected, as I informed the President of the Conference in writing. And I thank him for his reply on the subject of parliamentary standards. During the discussion in the Committee on the Application of Standards, there were a number of incidents that were intended to disrupt the spirit of dialogue in which we like to work. As the leader of the Employers' group, I always have respected this spirit.

We fully accept agreements and procedures decided upon in good faith. There was a single list, and we refuse to accept that there should be one list for the Committee and another for the plenary. We therefore emphatically reject any attempt to reopen the discussion on Colombia. We are very surprised that a Government, that did not even take part in the Committee on the Application of Standards, should attempt to express its views on the matter here in the plenary.

We are fully respectful of the institution. And I can assure you that the employers of the world are prepared to comply with all principles, all agreements. But it is no good discussing principles if these are then violated in the plenary.

Original Spanish: Mr. ALVIZ FERNÁNDEZ (Worker, Colombia)

As the Workers' delegate of Colombia, I would like first of all to reaffirm our total and absolute support for the statements made by Mr. Cortebecq, the spokesperson for the Workers, because all of the information was provided by the Workers' group of Colombia. We are not reopening the debate, we just want to state here, in this assembly, that we are not in any way attempting to distort the reality in Colombia – violations of fundamental human rights, violence and impunity – of which this house has been well aware for the last 20 years.

As a trade union movement, we value, we are aware of, and we strive to seek agreement through social dialogue and we will continue to do so. The dialogue we seek must be an effective dialogue, one that produces results. That is our goal.

The fact that we are reaching agreement on wages is fine, and we will continue to work for these if appropriate, and if conditions allow. But this cannot be bandied about as absolute proof of the fact that conditions for trade unionists in Colombia are entirely normal. We do engage in political activities, and the fact that some past members of the trade union movement may have risen to the rank of minister does not necessarily mean that the fundamental rights of workers are being respected, or that the procedures adopted by the ILO are being adhered to. Not even a low-level representative of the trade union movement has said that we have an open Government. No, we are not engaged in opposition for opposition's sake. We have come to claim our economic, social and political rights, and we will continue to do so until such time as we have achieved our aim for the good of society, for the good of the workers and for the future development of our country.

Original French: Mr. TOENGAHO LOKUNDO (Government, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

On behalf of the Minister of Labour and Social Security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who is heading this country's delegation at this very important Conference, I would first of all like to make it clear that the Government part of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo definitely attended this session of the International Labour Conference.

With regard to the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards, on behalf of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to say that our country, which, as you know, is currently going through difficult times, is trying to establish all the necessary instruments for the effective operation of the institutions of the new third Democratic Republic, for which the country has been waiting for 45 years.

As you know, we have just held free, democratic and transparent elections in our country. In this regard, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to reaffirm its commitment to be fully involved in the work of, and obligations relating to, the ILO. We recognize the significant impact that the ILO's work has on the quality of life in our country.

We would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved, including the Government group, Workers and Employers and members of the Committee on the Application of Standards, for having appreciated the problems faced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for having recommended the technical assistance which we so greatly need.

Mr. SITHOLE (Worker, Swaziland)

I am taking this opportunity to respond to the scathing attack by the spokesperson of the Zimbabwean Government, particularly where allegations were made to the effect that the selection of Zimbabwe might have been influenced by politics or colonial reasons.

I would like to say that the criteria for selecting countries that have to appear before the Committee are based on violations of Conventions freely rati-

fied by those countries. For any country that does not want to appear on the list, the answer is simple. It is for them to take it upon themselves to apply in law and in practice the Conventions they have freely ratified.

We also would like to express our concern on the unparliamentary language that has been used. First and foremost, there was an implication that attendants to that case would be making themselves accomplices. Secondly, they made a statement to the effect that they did not want to be part of this soiled discussion, which actually does demonstrate an undermining of the supervisory machinery and the workings of this Committee.

We would also want to state that we as Workers will continue to help any country, Zimbabwe included, while repression and oppression and beatings and brutality and inhumane activities are inflicted upon workers performing their normal trade union work.

Original French: Mr. CORTEBEECK (Worker, Belgium)

To draw up a list of cases is a very difficult and delicate process, as we all know. You have to have various elements and criteria, but these can never be mathematical. There also has to be a transparent system, as transparent as possible. This is why we decided together – that is, the Employers and Workers – to inform the governments with regard to the cases, the methods we had used to select them and so on. Thirdly, the social partners have to agree on the cases, which is not always possible – certainly not this year.

Therefore, it was a very difficult process but I think nonetheless that the spokespersons, in their report to the plenary, are entitled to explain what the difficulties were and why they had certain difficulties, and that is what the spokesperson of the Workers' group did – nothing more and nothing less.

Original Spanish: Mr. ECHAVARRÍA SALDARRIAGA (Employer, Colombia)

I am speaking from my seat because of physical restrictions. But I consider it necessary to take the floor, given the fact that unfortunately this plenary is being used to refer to a country which was not actually on the list, my own country.

As I have already said in my statement in the plenary, as employers we feel bound to note the genuine progress that has been made in our country, with the firm support of the ILO provided in the form of cooperation.

These cases of progress are clear on many fronts: there has been a clear drop in violence, in the crimes committed in the country, and in the violence against trade union leaders, as well as against employers. Violence is widespread in Colombia, but we are seeing progress towards a solution.

Since 2003, the ILO has been supporting Colombia through technical cooperation, and this has borne fruit. Now, there still needs to be more success in the future and there needs to be a specific and direct approach from the three stakeholders in this process, to give effect to this decision.

It is somewhat disingenuous to come and complain about what is going on, without actually participating in the work of the ILO representation. There is one party in particular in Colombia that is not playing by the rules, and the plenary ought to know this.

Our position as employers has been one of full support for the ILO, whereas there is some hypocrisy on the part of the workers, which we have to denounce here. They are not making progress there, but they are complaining here. We want to ensure that the outcome is the one that all Colombians want – peace. That process requires resolve and constant activity. There are challenges, personal challenges, challenges to our families, and we, employers, are willing to face them. We have seen significant progress over previous years in terms of irregular armed individuals being reintegrated in society. I can testify to specific decisions from the three branches of government (executive, legislative and judiciary) to ensure progress in this process with paramilitary groups – with the National Liberation Army (ENL) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to get them to enter the peace process.

This Organization must support the peace process. That is our request as employers, and it is our message here.

In Colombia the employers are firmly committed to definitive action to ensure that all of Colombian society is involved in a democratic peace process.

The PRESIDENT

We shall now proceed to note the report of the Committee on the Application of Standards. If there are no objections, may I ask that the Conference take note of the report of the Committee as a whole?

(The report as a whole is noted.)

Before we move on with our programme, I should just like to express my appreciation of the excellent work that has been done by this Committee, a key body in the ILO's supervisory machinery, in following up the action taken on instruments adopted by this Conference.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STRENGTHENING
OF THE ILO'S CAPACITY: SUBMISSION,
DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL**

The PRESIDENT

We shall now move on to the submission, consideration and approval of the report of the Committee on Strengthening of the ILO's Capacity.

The Committee's Officers were as follows: the Chairperson was Mr. Elmiger of Switzerland; the Employer Vice-Chairperson was Mr. Tabani of Pakistan; the Worker Vice-Chairperson was Sir Roy Trotman of Barbados. The Reporter was Mr. Kaasjager of the Netherlands, whom I invite to present the report.

Mr. KAASJAGER (*Government, Netherlands; Reporter of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity*)

It is my honour to present for your consideration the report of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity. The Committee was chaired by Mr. Elmiger and held 14 sittings. Our Committee met at a time when the multilateral system, created more than 50 years ago, is being rethought and the UN reform process is initiating a new means of responding to needs at the country level, notably through the so-called "Delivering as One" process.

The call for effectiveness and coherence is stronger than ever in a rapidly globalizing world. The social dimensions of globalization are becoming ever more apparent and decent work has been

accepted as a global objective. What does this mean for the ILO? What institutional responses are needed in order to meet these challenges? These were questions which featured prominently in our discussions.

Many times in the course of our deliberations, Committee members referred to the ILO Constitution, the Declaration of Philadelphia and the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. This is, I believe, because all Committee members sensed the historic importance of our discussions, discussions which have reaffirmed the mandate of the Organization, while at the same time critically examining its methods of work. Certain delegations stated that the Committee was examining the most important Conference agenda item of the past two decades.

I must confess that it was unclear at the outset of our debates what concrete outcomes our Committee could aspire to. The Office Report V addressing the highly complicated issues of coherence and institutional governance was a challenging one. Many delegates read it several times in order to grasp fully the complexities of vertical, horizontal and external governance, the opportunities offered by the UN reform process and how the ILO could rise to make full use of them.

In the course of our deliberations a number of delegates emphasized the importance of our Committee's work as a tool which would inform our further work. For this reason the report, which follows the structure of our debate, going through the chapters of Report V one by one, tried to capture the main points of each delegation's contributions and made no attempt to meld their views in any way. In my view, the report as it is before you, can indeed serve as a rich source to advance our discussions and I therefore recommend it to you heartily.

The convergence of views which our Committee achieved is well represented in the conclusions, to which I now turn. Under the guidance of our Chairperson, our Committee did not follow a formal amendment procedure. Nonetheless, in the process of developing, considering and adopting the conclusions, the views of all delegations were carefully considered. Having observed at close hand the drafting process, I am convinced that the views expressed by the various Government groups, as well as the social partners, are properly reflected in the conclusions. Their adoption by consensus attests to this, and they will no doubt prove to be a very useful point of departure for our work in the year ahead.

On a somewhat more personal note, I would add that the evenings spent with the drafting group threw tripartism into a new light for me. A sense of serenity, so typical of Mr. Tabani, had pervaded the room and we commenced our work. As the night wore on, all of us very eager to craft a balanced text that would serve the interests of all Committee members, a deep roar of thunder lent an unpromising air to the proceedings. Someone in the room said she hoped the violent cracks of thunder were not a bad omen, but they were not. As if to blunt the force of nature, the deputy representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lee Swepston, who by the way celebrates his last Conference day in his professional life today, broke out in song and Sir Leroy joined in later. Undoubtedly, sharing an ordered-in pizza also reinforced the productivity of the drafting group. Hunger is a bad counsellor.

Our Committee concluded its work with a widespread sense of satisfaction, although a true compromise always implies a little sadness for every delegation on some of the elements of the outcome. But this was, after all, a first-round exploratory debate and we consciously chose to leave options open for further reflection during the intersessional consultations as well as at the 2008 session of the International Labour Conference, of course. Paragraph 16 of the conclusions reflects our Committee's desire to see the continuation and conclusion of our discussions on that occasion and invites the Governing Body to place an item on the agenda to permit this. This desire is echoed and amplified in the draft resolution concerning strengthening the ILO's capacity, which you have before you. In more simple words, our work has only just begun.

In all these matters, the success of our Committee was possible only through the constructive contribution of its members. The active participation of Government delegations, both individually and as groups, was testimony to the strategic importance of strengthening the ILO's capacity. The social partners, so eloquently represented by Mr. Tabani, for the Employers' group, and Mr. Trotman for the Workers' group, demonstrated the virtues of tripartism at its best. The clarity of their presentations, their attitude of openness and understanding, and their comprehensive and substantive comments on each of the items under discussion, enriched the debates and led to solid results.

I have arrived at the "thank you" part. I wish to direct my personal words of thanks to our Chairperson, Mr. Elmiger, for his wise and efficient manner of conducting the Committee's work. We Committee members arrived in Geneva as more than 200 individuals, each with our own opinions on the complex issues that lay ahead. Our Chairperson skilfully led us to become a Committee that could work as one.

We have spoken much in recent days about strengthening the ILO's capacity, but today I would like to thank the Office for demonstrating that capacity is available to support us in our Conference work. First of all, we should be deeply grateful for the dedication and expertise of the Special Adviser of our Committee, Mr. Maupain. He provided the basis for our discussion. Also, I thank the many senior ILO managers and experts who made themselves available to our Committee.

I would also like to add a word of thanks to those often unseen support staff who work from dusk to dawn to finalize one day's work and prepare for the next. Without these loyal report writers, interpreters, secretaries and assistants, no Conference Committee, including ours, could function. I am particularly grateful to Lee Swepston, Javier Escobar, Ann Herbert and her colleagues for this kind and professional support.

Finally, I thank the Government members of the Committee for entrusting me with the task of reporting and acting as one of their Officers. I look forward to the continuation of our important debate in the period to come.

Mr. TABANI (*Employer, Pakistan; Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity*)

As spokesperson for the Employers' group in this debate, it is my pleasure to say a few words on the adoption of the resolution and the conclusions contained in the report of the Committee which has just

been presented by Mr. Kaasjager, and I want to thank him and congratulate him for the excellent account of our work that he has just presented to the Conference.

For the past two weeks we worked to arrive at a consensus as to how the ILO could best be strengthened in order to assist its members within the context of globalization. For us, the Employers' group, it has been a rewarding experience. We pass on the conclusions now to the Governing Body to take this matter forward, so as to enable further discussion in 2008 with an outcome that enjoys the support of the three groups.

If we are to take the ILO forward, ongoing consensus is important so as to ensure that all the three constituents feel that their contribution is recognized, and also to ensure that the outcome is owned by them. This was an important and complex discussion, as described by the Reporter.

The context of the world of work is changing in the face of globalization and the ILO needs to follow this change. While we need to continue to explore in the Governing Body the modalities of what we have recommended today, the Office must also address the strong consensus that emerged regarding strengthening its own capacity.

The ILO needs to meet its Members' needs to remain vital and relevant to them, but it must also articulate a clear role within UN reform in order to ensure that the world of work is strongly represented within any integrated UN. It needs to be a centre of excellence in the areas covered by its mandate, which is the world of work. This requires renewing its knowledge and skills base, and improving its analytical capacity. It needs to nurture an intellectual climate that encourages objectivity, questioning and vigour, in analysis. Policy should be based on factual data and tested against real world labour market outcomes. The technical cooperation and policy development of the ILO should positively impact on the lives of people on the ground.

The objectives and processes of Decent Work Country Programmes should be constituent-owned and constituent-driven. Capacity is key to the way forward. We need to ensure that the ILO is able to deliver what it promises. Policy advocacy, whilst important, is not enough, either for us as constituents or for the wider multilateral system, because we need to be able to show that our ideas actually work. If they do not, we should not hesitate to amend our approaches. We need to continuously update ourselves while at the same time maintaining a strategic focus. Since our resources are not limitless, we should refrain from trying to go beyond our mandate.

The conclusions we have reached are a fair reflection of the views of all the members of our Committee, as has been pointed out by our Reporter. A lot of questions were asked as we worked through the issues raised in the report. Some of those were answered, some were not. I am sure more questions will arise but that is to be expected. In a debate of this complex nature, we should continue the search to satisfy ourselves that what we propose can work, and thus we shall succeed in strengthening the ILO's capacity to help its Members.

Coming to the "thank you" area again, may I take this opportunity to thank our Chair, Mr. Elmiger, with whom I had the pleasure of working before in the Working Party. His institutional knowledge and

experience served us well in the creation of this convergence. Mr. Kaasjager did an excellent job of coordination, particularly with the Government group.

To Sir Leroy Trotman and his team, our thanks for the constructive dialogue we were able to establish, both in the Committee and outside of it, where bipartite dialogues helped us understand each other better.

To all the Governments that participated we say thank you for your ideas and for working so openly with us. I should also like to thank Mr. Tapiola, Mr. Maupin and all the others in their team for the excellent support we got from the Office. I am sure we can all be satisfied with this initial result, but it is only a beginning and we hope that as we move forward we can remain focused on a consensus and continue to respect the views of each other.

Finally, I am pleased to inform you that the Employers' group supports the adoption of the resolution and conclusions as presented.

Mr. TROTMAN (*Worker, Barbados; Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity*)

Mr. President, Director-General, dear colleagues, the Workers' group wishes to add its voice with pride to the consensual outcome and achievement of the general discussion on strengthening the ILO's capacity in the era of globalization. What resonates clearly from the two weeks of frank and rich discussion held in the Committee is the commitment of all three constituents to the relevance of the Organization, its values and objectives.

The work we have done on the matter of strengthening the ILO should be seen by us all, however, as work in progress. We may have had different opinions regarding how we have to work to strengthen the ILO and to help it to respond more effectively to the needs of its constituents.

The discussions clearly showed however that there are several areas in which new thinking can be developed in order to make the Organization even more relevant for its constituents: the organizational implications of its structure both at headquarters and in the field; new ways of enhancing the value of the International Labour Conference, the renewed capacity in the area of research, knowledge, skills base, analytical capacity and policy advice; and policy coherence within the multilateral system, among other things.

We agreed that the objective was to find ways by which the ILO could benefit optimally from the resources put into it. It was to improve the way the Members' expressions were filtered by the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference, and reflected in programmes presented back to the Members, to show that the Office, the Governments concerned, the Employers and the Workers were singing from the same hymn sheet for greater efficiency and empowerment. The Committee's work was not seen by the Workers' benches as the occasion for the ILO to retreat to a corner where it would be seen but not heard while the religion of liberalization and ungoverned markets drove in the wedge that would widen the gap between the producers of wealth and those who relax in their enjoyment of it.

The Workers saw the work of the Committee as an occasion to demonstrate, contrary to some pundits, that the message of the ILO, its focus and its passion must still be in the governing ideals of the

Preamble to the Constitution and in the Declaration of Philadelphia.

It is a process of renewed strength that uses the Decent Work Agenda as the global goal and the global checklist against the persistent and deep decent work deficits which governments, employers and workers have committed themselves to eliminating.

The historical dimension of our task was clearly felt throughout the days we spent in deliberation. We were treating themes which – if taken one by one – were not new, but everybody felt that new answers were needed in the era in which the world is changing with such speed.

In my opening speech I said that the goal for the Workers was to pursue practical ideas for strengthening working methods for both the ILO and for its constituents. I think that the discussion and the conclusions we have adopted have led to a concrete roadmap for the Organization which now has to be followed up with specific proposals, both in the Governing Body and in next year's Conference.

The ideas on which we have built are not new conclusions. We have been guided to this position logically by the 2004 conclusions of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the subsequent ILC report in June of the same year by the various discussions in the Working Party, in the various Committees of the Governing Body and in the Governing Body itself.

We must include in our planning the relevance of the commitment to work within the ILO's objectives as set out in the Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia, complemented by the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and reflected in the Decent Work Agenda.

We must also be faithful to the unanimous agreement that we must not weaken the ILO's existing procedures, including standard setting and the supervisory mechanisms. We should enforce the importance of promoting a more integrated approach to the strategic objectives which, through their interdependence and complementarity, define the very concept of decent work. We must show how this helps in terms of social progress, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

Even if we were all focused clearly on the institutional capacity of the Organization, it is true that we also had in mind the UN reform discussion which is taking place. We are not tired of repeating that the centrality of decent work is also a means of maintaining the tripartite structure of the ILO firmly anchored within the UN family.

We do so not for any parochial link to the Organization, nor for the role that we play in that machinery, but because we are firmly convinced that international labour standards, tripartism, freedom of association and collective bargaining remain as relevant as ever for creating and maintaining social peace and sustainable development throughout the world.

And this is why we believe that, in 12 months' time, we will be collectively able to deliver an authoritative instrument, a proposed declaration, that will allow the Organization to define a way forward for an integrated social policy which will be the foundation of the Decent Work Country Programmes and, in general, of socio-economic policies adopted by member States. We are pleased that the resolution coming from the Committee asked the Governing Body in November to place an item

on the 2008 International Labour Conference agenda. We will be working, as we have done up to now, towards the building of the widest possible consensus on a document that we intended to shape as the operative follow-up to the Declaration of Philadelphia and which will therefore address national and international commitments.

The commitment made to strengthening the ILO that we have heard during the past two weeks gives us renewed hope. It is left only for me to follow, as Mr. Tabani has done, and thank everyone from the Chairperson through to Mr. Francis Maupain, the person who put it all together in terms of the language, down to the person who even made the photocopies, to thank all of those who assisted us from the most senior to the most junior, for having been so exceptionally attentive and caring and for having helped to move this matter forward. I would also like to thank the Reporter for setting the foundations for the presentation of the Declaration in 2008.

Original French: Mr. ELMIGER (Government, Switzerland; Chairperson, Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity)

I would like to thank all those who participated in the examination of a matter which has a truly historic dimension for our Organization. It was no doubt the awareness of this historic dimension has created a climate of efficiency and convergence of interest within the Committee, which made it possible to arrive at conclusions that are based on a very strong consensus.

We do not yet have any concrete solutions, but we were able to take an analytical approach shared by all Members. The effectiveness of the ILO is not a question of more constitutional means. It is a question of better governance in order to make better use of those means, and harness them for the objectives of decent work.

The conclusions are based on this analytical approach. They also stem from a common idea, namely the ILO's unique ability to persuade, through its tripartite structure.

The tripartite structure provides legitimacy to standards and it should make it possible to persuade Members that the solutions for social progress are viable in the long term only if they are linked to sustainable development. The tripartite structure should enable the ILO to have effective influence on actors, other than States, without departing from its mandate, or interfering with the mandates of other institutions.

We have passed a key stage. We agreed that it was only a stage and to meet again next year. We have carefully paved the way for a text which could lay down the historic significance of our common efforts. Much remains to be done. We will need a lot of discussion and consultations to consolidate and build on the emerging consensus within the Governing Body. I therefore wish the Governing Body good luck with pursuing the efforts our Organization has decided to undertake to make its values and objectives a reality.

The PRESIDENT

The general discussion on the report is now open.

Mr. PATEL (*Worker, South Africa*)

It is a pleasure for me, as a member of the Workers' group, as well as the Worker representative of South Africa, to commend the report of the Committee.

This Committee had to undertake a difficult but important task: to develop solid ideas that would strengthen the capacity of countries to achieve decent work goals in the context of globalization, that vast, challenging and systemic change to economies and societies, as big at least as the Industrial Revolution that took many countries out of feudalism in an earlier age.

The conclusions recognize the need for the ILO to adopt an authoritative document, possibly in the form of a Declaration, as part response of the Organization and its Members to globalization.

In going forward over complex terrain, we may benefit from looking at our history.

Some 63 years ago, in a world ravaged by war, ILO member States assembled in Philadelphia and formulated a Declaration – a Declaration that gave hope and inspiration to a war-weary world. That Declaration asserted fundamental values – that labour is not a commodity, that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere, that freedom of expression and association are essential to sustained progress. It redefined the aims and purposes of the Organization.

Within the next few years thereafter, the ILO embarked on an extensive programme of constructing and adopting major Conventions, including some of the core Conventions on freedom of association, collective bargaining and equal remuneration. The world of work had a new normative framework.

Today, in different circumstances, our world faces equally deep challenges: challenges of rising inequalities in income and wealth, of the painful effects of global competition, of high levels of poverty and unemployment. Many millions of working and unemployed people seek hope and inspiration.

Coexisting with this reality of social exclusion, there are also high rates of economic growth and rapid industrialization in some parts of the world, an explosion of innovation in communications and information technology and an interdependent world. So we have deep problems but also real opportunity. Can we rise to the needs of our times?

To do so would be to emerge with a plan of work, a set of principles and an instrument that take the Philadelphia mandate – which is as relevant as ever – and find ways to make it practically effective in a globalized world.

The constituents recognize that they face a choice: either to descend to a minimalist package, simply and only focused office efficiencies, playing, if you like, at the margins, a lowest common denominator that produces vacuous text that we all praise but with few real tools or new ideas to shape our world, and shape globalization; or to set a level of ambition that is commensurate with the importance of the topic. It is vital that the constituents really do proceed with the more visionary second option that will produce a result consistent with the way the opportunities noted were described: as the most important ILC discussion in the past 20 years.

The conclusions prepared by the Committee are a solid platform on which we can jointly build. They have an objective: namely, producing and promoting decent work in the context of globalization. They have a method: namely, tripartism. They have defined social actors: namely, governments and employers' and workers' organizations, as well as partner institutions ranging from UN agencies through multilateral institutions, to multinational enterprises. They have a proposed instrument:

namely, an authoritative document, possibly in the form of a Declaration. They have a resource focus: namely, office research, analytical and policy capacity and, also, constituent capacity. They set a framework for partnerships with other organizations, such as the World Bank, the IMF, the UN agencies and others: namely, the Decent Work Agenda and how to achieve decent work across the world through the programmes of all multilateral institutions.

The conclusions contemplate a new standing committee at the International Labour Conference which will consider, on a cyclical or other periodic basis, a review of decent work components focusing on employment, social protection, standards and social dialogue.

The conclusions call for the integration of all four strategic objectives, so that the ILO takes a powerful, coherent package of development tools to constituents, as opposed to being what we might call a bits-and-pieces or patchwork consultancy.

The conclusions recognize a national and a global component in the response to the challenges of our times.

The Committee's work was characterized by consensus of outcomes after frank and constructive debates. Employers, Governments and Workers worked together to achieve meaningful outcomes. We look forward to this spirit continuing in the intersessional consultations and at the Governing Body in November to define this item for discussion at the 2008 session of the International Labour Conference in a way that lives up to the challenges that globalization poses to our people.

Original Arabic: Mr. MALDAOUN (Government, Syrian Arab Republic)

We believe that dialogue among the three social partners to strengthen the ILO's capacity is a very efficient model, which can guide us and help us improve dialogue among the three stakeholders. This is an overriding objective, through which we endeavour to fulfil the other strategic objectives of the ILO.

We believe that creating an enabling environment for decent work is the best way to achieve sustainable development in the era of globalization, which should also benefit the poorest countries. The greater the pressure, the greater the need to strengthen the ILO's capacities and hence those of the constituents themselves. We would not be able to attain these objectives if we did not first create an environment conducive to prosperity for all, and if we did not achieve our aims in regard to decent work.

That is why economic growth is necessary. That may seem rather difficult for some, but we believe it is possible. That is why my country supported the idea of adopting an authoritative document, a declaration based on consensus.

I certainly hope that such a document can be drafted before we meet again at the next session of the Conference, so that in the long term, we will be able to ensure that decent work is not simply a dead letter.

The conclusions that have been read out appear to be satisfactory, and we endorse them.

Mr. DE PRETER (Government, Belgium)

I have the honour to bring to your attention this statement, on behalf of the Government group.

The Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity, to assist its Members in the context of globalization, has successfully concluded its first discussion on this matter and we would like to thank and congratulate all those many people from Governments, from the Workers' and Employers' groups, and, of course, the Office, for their involvement in the process.

In so far as the Governing Body, in accordance with paragraph 2(a) of the resolution concerning strengthening the ILO's capacity, is invited to decide on placing an item on the agenda of the 97th Session of the Conference (2008), it is important to consider the intersessional process, as stated in the Committee's conclusions.

In our view, the process of consultation, until next year's session of the International Labour Conference, is the key to reaching an outcome which is acceptable to all constituents and would also effectively strengthen the ILO's capacity to assist its Members. It is therefore crucial that all tripartite constituents have a role in steering the process.

The Government group therefore proposes that, in the next 12 months, intersessional consultations should be organized in a way that would allow the challenges ahead to be met, for example, in the form of open-ended ad hoc working groups that could meet at least once before the November 2007 session of the Governing Body and then again in connection with the other Governing Body sessions.

The Government group asks the Office to take the appropriate measures to implement a programme of work to address the concerns of constituents in accordance with paragraph 2(b) of the resolution. With a view to holding these consultations, the Government group would like to ask the Office to prepare discussion papers in order to be fully prepared for the difficult task ahead.

The PRESIDENT

I see no further requests for the floor. I therefore propose that we proceed to approve the report of the Committee. This is contained in paragraphs 1–208 of *Provisional Record* No. 23. If there are no objections, may I take it that the report is approved?

(The report – paragraphs 1–208 – is approved.)

**CONCLUSIONS ON STRENGTHENING
THE ILO'S CAPACITY: ADOPTION**

The PRESIDENT

We shall now move to the adoption of the Committee's conclusions, paragraph by paragraph.

(The conclusions – paragraphs 1–17 – are adopted, seriatim.)

May I take it that the Conference approves the report and adopts the conclusions of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity as a whole?

(The report is approved and the conclusions are adopted as a whole.)

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING STRENGTHENING
THE ILO'S CAPACITY: ADOPTION**

The PRESIDENT

The Committee also adopted a resolution concerning strengthening the ILO's capacity, which includes the decision to place an item on the agenda of the 97th Session of the Conference in 2008 with

a view to following up the Committee's discussions. The resolution is now submitted to the Conference for adoption. Are there any objections?

(The resolution is adopted.)

I should like to offer my sincere thanks to the Committee for the work done. Great institutions like the International Labour Organization must constantly hold themselves up to scrutiny. The world changes quickly and the ILO must change with it to be best able to serve the purpose for which it was established. The Committee has done important work in this direction and deserves our congratulations. The tripartite members were ably supported by the secretariat, who also deserve our thanks and congratulations.

(The sitting adjourned at 1.55 p.m. and resumed at 2.10 p.m.)

CLOSING SPEECHES

The PRESIDENT

We have now arrived at the conclusion of the work of the Conference, the closing ceremony.

Original French: Mr. BARDE (Employer, Switzerland; Employer Vice-President of the Conference)

As we move to the close of the 96th Session of the Conference, I would like to start by thanking you and thanking the Employers' group for the trust that they have placed in me. This indeed, in turn, is an honour for the Swiss Employers' Union. I am their delegate within this Organization.

Allow me also to thank our President and Vice-Presidents and, indeed, the Secretary-General of the Conference and the team as a whole.

I think this session, as it draws to a close, has shown the challenges ahead of us. As a member of the Employers' group, allow me, if I may, just to underscore some of those challenges.

First of all, it has to do with freedom of association, both for employers as for workers. This is a fundamental principle and this house and those who take the floor in this house must be guarantors of that principle. It is also the respect for tripartism and social dialogue in deeds and not just in words. It is listening to the constituents at headquarters, and also in the regions. It has to do with promoting employment. This, of course, is something that should be self-evident in an organization, which is devoted to the world of work and jobs that are in sustainable enterprises; in other words, the durability of which should be enhanced within the context of the necessary modernization of labour governance. Security and predictability, which is something which employers and workers both want, require respect for these principles and, indeed, respect for law.

We must avoid the temptation of political opportunism and, in addition, that of a drift into populism, which is something which could threaten the very values of our Organization. Our Organization, given the UN reform, needs to focus on what makes it specific. In other words, the ILO is a meeting of governments, employers and workers. It is unique in the international system. That is what needs to be emphasized, and in order to do that we need to focus on our core business, our brand. It is at that price that our Organization and its secretariat, the ILO, will be able to keep the necessary level of expertise which we need and which may get lost if we overly dilute our efforts.

I would conclude by also saying that this expertise also means keeping headquarters in good shape because, of course, the environment itself is an important factor for productive work and reflection.

As I move to the end of my term of office at the ILO, I would certainly wish you all every success and, of course, thank you for the quality of the ties that I have been able to forge here.

(Applause.)

Original French: Mr. BLONDEL (Worker, France; Worker Vice-President of the Conference)

Firstly, I would like to thank the Workers' group for the trust placed in me by proposing me as Worker Vice-President of this 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I also want to congratulate the President of the Conference, Mr. Sulka, the Government Vice-President, Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, and the Employer Vice-President Mr. Barde, on their election and on our excellent cooperation.

This high post was not really something that I wanted. It has, however, been an occasion to measure the attachment of my country and of the union movement in my country to the ILO, in the tradition, of L'eon Jouhaux and Messrs. Valline, Ramadier, Parodi, Ventejol, Oeschlin, Chotard and Séguin, not forgetting the former Director-General, Mr. Blanchard.

This 2007 session was held in an international context characterized by the reform of the United Nations. This no doubt offers the ILO an opportunity to promote the Decent Work Agenda among other international organizations and to make decent work a reality in the field. However, it also raises real challenges. The ILO has to guarantee that its tripartite nature is respected, in essence and in substance. For the Workers' group this means, most definitely, ensuring that union organizations can benefit from resources and support in the field and that the ILO will continue to promote a favourable environment for the establishment and strengthening of unions throughout the world. There cannot be artificial tripartism. The right of association of workers and employers needs to be more than a legal statement, it must breathe life. Violations of trade union rights all too often reveal the urgency of the task. International labour standards, which are at the basis of the creation of the Organization in 1919, should also continue to represent the specific value of the ILO in implementing what we now call "One UN".

Allow me to say a few words about the work done in the last few weeks.

Concerning the Committee on the Application of Standards, we regret the refusal of the Employers to include Colombia in the list of cases to be dealt with. The "signs of progress" mentioned by the Employers as a reason for refusing a discussion are all the more incomprehensible because they are contradicted by the facts. At least 76 trade unionists were killed in 2006 and, in 2007, 12 union activists have already been assassinated. The country is facing a complete breakdown in collective bargaining, and unions are being refused registration. I have to say that the Committee on the Application of Standards must be free to choose its agenda, and no veto should be allowed to block the examination of any cases. The impossibility of discussing the case of Colombia caused a great deal of frustration in the

Workers' group. But we are determined to come back to this case as long as the situation so requires.

My group also deplores the attitude of Zimbabwe, which refused to come before the Committee, saying that it did not want to be an accomplice of the political instrumentalization of the Committee by the colonialists. Do I look like a colonialist? The Government also demonstrated its duplicity in putting its observers anonymously in the room. However, we are pleased that Zimbabwe is dealt with in a special paragraph by the Committee, referring to the seriousness of violations of union rights in that country.

The Committee also looked at the case of Belarus. The Belarus Government did not manage to convince the Committee that the last-minute changes made in its draft laws constitute the kind of decisive progress that the Governing Body called for last March. This lack of progress meant that Belarus too was cited by a special paragraph.

Our group is worried by the serious, persistent violations of the rights of workers in the Philippines, in Turkey and in Egypt.

The situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, where independent trade unionists are constantly repressed is very alarming. Mahmoud Salehi, who is in prison, has not been allowed by the prison authorities to have the medical care he needs and his life is in danger. Mansour Osanlo, President of the Union of Chauffeurs in Tehran, has been locked up for five years. And there are other cases of people whose health is threatened, such as Milan Cosma and his colleagues in Romania.

Finally, we are sorry that Djibrine Asalli, President of UST, was not authorized to leave Chad to come to this Conference, because he refused to call off a general strike.

Our group is particularly happy with the work done within the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity in the Context of Globalization. The Committee renewed its commitment to the constituents of the ILO to work in the framework of the objectives of the Organization, as reflected in its Constitution, the Declaration of Philadelphia and the Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998 and the Decent Work Agenda. In the course of its discussions, the Committee expressed the will to consolidate existing procedures, including the drafting of standards and the supervisory machinery, the importance of promoting a more integrated approach to strategic objectives whose interdependence and complementarity define the very concept of decent work, and the way this Agenda contributes to social progress, to sustainable development and to the eradication of poverty. Decent work was also seen as a way to maintain the ILO and its tripartite structure firmly anchored within the reform of the United Nations. For all these reasons, we are pleased that the Committee asked the Governing Body in November to include on the agenda in 2008 an authoritative document solemnly reaffirming our common objective, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the ILO. I am pleased therefore with the results achieved this year and I am more than ever convinced of the need to finalize the second part of this work next year.

The Workers' group is happy with the adoption of the work in the fishing Convention. This new document will make it possible to provide decent work for many people in a sector which is known to

be dangerous. The adoption of this Convention shows the relevance of the ILO's standard-setting function and the effectiveness of social dialogue. Our group will measure the success of the Convention by the impact it has on the world of work, and we appeal for its ratification and implementation. We are sorry that some of the countries that participated in drafting it should shamelessly refuse to ratify it. I must remind you all of the universal vocation of these standards, whatever their nature.

The general discussion in the Committee on Durable Enterprises made possible a tripartite consensus on the need for enterprises to adhere to the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development and the conclusions recognized the need for a legislative. The conclusions it adopted recognize the need for laws and regulations to guide enterprises towards activities that are socially responsible and respect the environment. In the future, the work of the ILO in the area of sustainable enterprises will be based on the Decent Work Agenda. We are glad to see that international labour standards, macroeconomic policies promoting employment, labour legislation, social security, social dialogue and collective bargaining have been recognized as being necessary for the promotion of sustainable enterprises.

The Conference also considered the budget of the Organization. Everyone knows that the Workers believe that we need to finance the world of work regularly and constantly. This is all the more necessary because of globalization and its consequences for work in general. It is better to finance work than war. After lengthy discussion the Director-General presented a budget with zero annual growth and protected against inflation and the risks of currency variations. In this, he had the support of the Workers' group, as well as of a majority of countries. I congratulate and thank all those countries which pay their contributions at the proper time. Allow me, however, to note that for reasons of economy we are sometimes forced to bypass the Standing Orders and the Constitution. This was the case again this year for translation into the three official languages: English, French and Spanish. Allow me to remind you of the need to invest in the refurbishment of our ILO headquarters. Of course, the ILO is not just about paying the staff and its physical assets – its administrative management, so to speak. But that is precisely why in future budgets we cannot hope to finance our activities with zero growth.

The discussion of the Global Report and the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work showed that discrimination is today a widespread phenomenon that takes various forms. The difficulty of reconciling work and family responsibilities, owing to inappropriate policies, affect above all women who are in precarious jobs where they are often not covered by labour law. The wage gap between women and men for equal work continues to widen. Racial discrimination is still a major problem, as is the serious abuse of migrants. We reiterate the wish of our group that next year's report should reflect the violation of laws on anti-union discrimination. We invite member States and donors to provide sufficient resources so that the Office can, in the coming years, implement a plan of action against discrimination matching the seriousness of the problems to be resolved. It is a long-term commitment, because

it brings us up against cultural and societal practices. I hope that one day all women and men will be equal in freedom.

In conclusion, I would like once again to thank you for your confidence and trust. I address my sincere thanks to all the staff, the interpreters, the translators, the printers and the management behind this Conference, whether they are visible or less visible because they work even at night, for their hard work and skill. They have contributed very much to the success of this 96th Session. And since we are now coming to the end of our work, we look forward to the 97th Session of the Conference of the ILO. Thank you for your attention.

Mr. DA ROCHA PARANHOS (*Government, Brazil; Government Vice-President of the Conference*)

I would like to start by stressing how honoured I am personally on having been elected as Government Vice-President of the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference. This honour is compounded by the fact that, being the representative of Brazil here in Geneva to the ILO, I feel honoured because I think it is not a personal reward, but a recognition of Brazil as a country that lives in a climate of social peace, with perfect social dialogue.

I do not need to recall the fact that President Lula da Silva has been an important leader of the workers' movement in Brazil. And he chose the ILO to be one of the very first international organizations he visited immediately after his election as President of Brazil.

From the government perspective, I would like to recall some of the achievements of this important session of the Conference: the adoption of the Convention and Recommendation concerning work in the fishing sector, which shows that the tripartite process has led to success in this field, which has taken quite some time to achieve, but it shows that tripartism really works.

I would also like to refer to the work of the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity and say to the resolution concerning strengthening the ILO's capacity and say that we look forward to the examination by the November session of the Governing Body of the resolution to place on the agenda of the 97th Session in 2008 an agenda item leading to an authoritative document crystallizing the noble objective of our Organization.

I should also like to welcome the important work conducted by the committees of the Conference: the Committee on the Application of Standards, the Committee on Sustainable Enterprises and the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity, and also – as my fellow Officers have already mentioned – the adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2008–09, which will allow the Organization to function viably and to develop its action towards decent work.

This has been a very important personal experience for me, and I note the new format of the Conference, with the committees and the plenary functioning as a political segment, and hope that we may look forward to renewing this experience in the Governing Body in November.

Finally, and moving to the “thank you” segment of my statement, I would like to thank you all for the excellent climate of cooperation during this session. My special thanks go to the Director-General, my good friend Mr. Juan Somavia, and to his staff. But above all to all my fellow Officers: Mr. Barde,

the Employer Vice-President; Mr. Blondel, the Worker Vice-President; and specifically to you, the President, Mr. Sulka, who so patiently conducted our work during sometimes very long sessions. I would also like to join Mr. Blondel in thanking all the interpreters and the support staff for the results of this very effective and productive Conference.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

My first words would be to thank President Sulka for his work, his availability at a crucial time for the institution, and for the way in which he has conducted our proceedings. I also wish to thank my friend, Mr. Rocha Paranhos, and Mr. Marc Blondel for their excellent work in the Governing Body. I further wish to thank Mr. Michel Barde for his presence and his long-standing contributions to the ILO, to which he himself has referred. Thank you very much for your contribution over all those years. And thank you to all our colleagues in the ILO who have lent their support for all the activities of this Conference. Thank you also to the bureaus of the various committees.

I would like you to know that the numerous consultations and conversations I have had left me with the feeling that important things were going on at this Conference: a new organizational structure which allowed us to concentrate on the work of the committees for one week and schedule the plenary meetings for the last week. I think in general there has been a feeling that this was a good way of proceeding to the organization of our work.

A new Convention was negotiated and the large number of votes it received suggests that the chances for ratification are very good. In my view, it is also important in another sense: in the past, we have voted on a Convention on fishers that did not receive sufficient support. In spite of this, the tripartite system was capable of coming back on the issue and reaching agreement on a Convention that obtained majority support.

As concerns sustainable enterprises, who would be in a better position than the tripartite constituents of the ILO to understand what sustainable enterprise is all about? Support for private enterprises and private initiatives is, of course, a key component of present-day economies. However, we have a special contribution to make, precisely by reaching agreement on what we, what those who actually experience the real economy on the ground mean by “sustainable enterprise”. I believe that we arrived at excellent conclusions, which will be very useful for the future.

As concerns the strengthening of the ILO's capacity, it was you who gave rise to this issue. When you had the discussion on the role of the ILO in the social dimension of globalization when you launched everything to do with the Decent Work Agenda and, in the light of the support we started to receive internationally, I concluded that all of this will lead to increased demands on the ILO and, consequently, a need to strengthen our capacities. Well after the discussion that took place in this form on ways to address the challenges of globalization, I started to work to ensure that we make efforts at the level of the Organization, start to think about this issue and engage in consultations. But in the final analysis what we are doing is strengthening the capacity of the ILO in the way in which you have decided to progress with the ILO, whose success was recognized internationally, and which made it nec-

essary to strengthen our capacity. As has been rightly pointed out by our Officers, it was a good discussion and we will continue consultations to ensure further progress at the next session of the Conference.

We managed to adopt the budget by an enormous majority. I would like to thank you all; these are complex matters and no one has such limitless resources as to use them unwisely. I therefore thank you for your support. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you that we have received information from a number of governments who have indicated that they are prepared or considering the possibility to contribute to the Regular Budget Supplementary Account. It would appear that there is actually going to be some support forthcoming for this new instrument.

The Committee on the Application of Standards continued its work on subjects which are of the greatest importance. If there is a contentious issue, it is only natural that it is also discussed in this plenary assembly. When it came to the award ceremony, we heard what President Mandela had to say. It was very simple, but very profound. We thanked him and asked permission to use his words: "Thank you because you refuse to forget us."

There is a dimension to this in our work, particularly when it comes to the Committee on the Application of Standards. There are subjects which we refuse to forget and which therefore come back again and again.

Before the Conference I received suggestions as to how we could improve the procedure, and all of this was very welcome, but the ILO has an essential task which is laid down by the Constitution and these are things that we must not, cannot, forget.

So let me thank you once and all for the support for my Report, which consolidated the ideas we have been working on and the importance of decent work as a tool to break out of poverty. These subjects have all been addressed and we must now think about what might be the subjects for future consideration. Sustainable development, of course, and everything that relates to it. We cannot be very specific about this yet, but to come back to our mandate as Mr. Barde reminded us. The mandate of achieving decent work in the real life of our economies is what determines our agenda. It is on that basis that we have to look to our conclusions. Political support will continue. The Inter-Parliamentary Union provided us with support as usual, and we had the presence and the support of a growing number of statesmen, which shows the importance they attach to our work.

So let me conclude by thanking all of you, because all of this is the outcome of our joint endeavours. This is the fruit of the work which we have been doing over the years, and in the final analysis it is tripartism that makes it all work. It is a living and creative principle. When the ILO's tripartism seeks the highest possible common denominator, when it is an ambitious kind of tripartism, tripartism which is sure of itself, which is self-confident, then it has a role to play. Not just among ourselves here but on the national and international levels, too. When it makes an effort, it has an influence it can bring to bear, through the support that we afford to the notion of decent work, to the social dimension of globalization and the obvious need to press for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These are all concepts which we have devel-

oped ourselves here and when we put them at that level they have influence. If we just go for the lowest common denominator, we are not going to have that kind of influence. It is not just analytical work, it is political influence which is important. I say what we have achieved is the highest common denominator. If we look at the issue of sustainable enterprise – this is something which is being discussed worldwide – how you can best promote this? What better than tripartism to achieve this? This is how we can be most effective to achieve that high level. If we want to be responsible, serious and profound in our work for tomorrow, we need to look at all the processes of investment and production and the technological changes which are driving everything.

We must not wait for these things to happen. We have to start thinking about these things in advance. We have to think in advance how we can best invest in the world of work and, once again, in looking for the highest common denominator, we will hopefully have the same level of influence that we have achieved thus far.

So, I trust you have all been very much stimulated by this Conference, having achieved important agreements, having arrived at agreements and convictions and understanding of the role that the ILO can play. We must always be robust in our response to these major challenges.

Once again, thank you very much. I think this has been a great General Conference. We are most grateful for the amount of work that has been done, all the consultations, all the dialogue with the constituents, which is really what underlies our success but, in the final analysis, it is you who have concluded the agreements, it is you who have made the important decisions of the Conference, it is you who ensure that we continue to be present in everyday life.

The PRESIDENT

I am very glad to comply with the old International Labour Conference custom of speaking last of all, but I do not intend to abuse this privilege.

We have worked very hard to achieve some brilliant results, the adoption of new international standards and of a programme and budget for the next two years, and I can imagine that, for most of you, your immediate ambition is to return safely to your homes.

Anyway, let me say a few personal words before we part. This Conference has been the collective achievement of delegates, Conference Officers and ILO staff. I am grateful to all delegations, delegates, advisers and observers for having worked in a spirit of friendship, mutual respect and tolerance. Our eminent special guests reminded us that we are facing common challenges and have heavy responsibilities towards our peoples.

The ILO provides us with an excellent, truly invaluable institutional framework. I am extremely happy that this assembly, which I have had the honour of presiding over, sent a clear signal that nations from all parts of the world are eager to use this framework to make their future better. I am very grateful to my fellow Officers, Mr. da Rocha Paranhos, Mr. Barde and Mr. Blondel for sharing the President's responsibilities and for their support in all areas. They have shown themselves to be very cooperative and impartial individuals, and it has

been a pleasure to work with them so harmoniously. Thank you, gentlemen.

I also wish to extend warm thanks to the Officers of all committees who, certainly inspired by Captain Campbell, Chairperson of the Committee on the Fishing Sector, tirelessly steered lay vessels into new waters. This is particularly true for the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity, which had to navigate in the uncharted swell and current of globalization through trying to reconcile the specific futures of the ILO and its traditions, with the numerous challenges before it.

Dear Mr. Somavia, let me say a word of deep appreciation for the staff of your Office, firstly to the Director of Conference Services, Mr. Steve Marshall, to whom we must wish luck in his new role as the ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar, and to Ricardo Hernandez-Pulido, Chief of the Official Relations and Documentation Branch; both have helped me enormously.

My work was also greatly facilitated by the Clerk of the Conference, Mr. Ian Newton, with a good dose of truly English humour, who has shown abundant talent in management of even the most delicate situations. His deputy, Mr. Tom Higgins, who unfortunately only rarely appeared on this podium, has been another key person in my team thanks to his exceptional nearly Shakespearian drafting skills. I am most grateful to the Office for providing me with an experienced assistant, Mr. Ludek Rychly, who guided me through the labyrinth of this Organization and advised me on many occasions.

I have been expertly assisted by a perfect professional secretary, Ms. Clare Schenker, and thanks to

her, I have never been swamped by the numerous obligations which are usually left to the job of the President of such an august assembly.

Obviously, the Conference could never function without the efforts, every day and often late at night, of many workers who remain invisible, or nearly so. My thanks go, therefore, to the translators and editors, to the text processors and secretaries, to the technical staff, the printing department and the document distributors, to the drivers and the cleaners and to the teams of young persons who have smiled at us as we entered our meeting rooms, perhaps above all as they are above us in the Assembly Hall. May I say a special word of thanks to the interpreters. Let us applaud the hard and dedicated efforts of all these workers.

Chairing this Conference has been a great honour for my small country and a big life experience for myself. Thank you once again for giving me this unforgettable opportunity to take part in an event which I will always remember as a celebration of friendship and cooperation between nations. May I wish you a safe return to your homes and every success in your work, wherever it may take you.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

Mr. President, just before closing this session, I have to give you the gavel, which is the symbol of your presidency, with your name on it and the year in which you presided over this Conference.

The PRESIDENT

The proceedings of the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference are now closed.

(The Conference adjourned sine die at 3 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Page

Twentieth sitting

Registration of ratification of international labour Conventions by the Republic of Montenegro.....	1
Report of the Committee on the Application of Standards: Submission, discussion and noting.....	2
<i>Speakers:</i> Mr. Nkhambule, Mr. Potter, Mr. Cortebeeck, Mr. Paixão Pardo, Mr. Saha, Mr. Shepard, Mr. Palacio Betancourt, Mr. Carvallo, Mr. Chipaziwa, Ms.Engelen-Kefer, Mr. Funes de Rioja, Mr. Alviz Fernández, Mr. Toengaho Lokundo, Mr. Sithole, Mr. Echavarría Saldarriaga	
Report of the Committee on Strengthening of the ILO's Capacity: Submission, discussion and approval.....	13
<i>Speakers:</i> Mr. Kaasjager, Mr. Tabani, Mr. Trotman, Mr. Elmiger, Mr. Patel, Mr. Maldaoun, Mr. de Preter	
Conclusions on strengthening the ILO's capacity: Adoption.....	17
Resolution concerning strengthening the ILO's capacity: Adoption	17
Closing speeches	18
<i>Speakers:</i> Mr. Barde, Mr. Blondel, Mr. Rocha Paranhos, The Secretary-General of the Conference, the President	