Fifteenth item on the agenda

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
Sixth Supplementary Report

World Congress on the Elimination of Child Labour

1. Action to combat child labour now figures much more prominently in the ILO's programmes than has been the case in the past. This is reflected in two important innovations:

- an Interdepartmental Project on the Elimination of Child Labour which is among the three interdepartmental projects provided for in the Programme and Budget for 1992-93 under major programme 140; and

- an International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) which is a major technical cooperation programme financed by extra-budgetary funds provided by the Government of Germany, and to which other bilateral donors may also contribute in the future.

2. Increasing attention is also being given by other international organisations (particularly the United Nations, UNICEF and UNESCO) as well as by governments and non-governmental organisations in several countries to programmes aimed at eliminating the abusive conditions to which many working children are exposed, and at the reduction and gradual elimination of child labour. In view of this growing interest in the problem and in practical action to combat it, there is a definite need to provide for an international exchange of views and experiences among all those concerned with child labour.

3. To this end, a small provision was made in the Programme and Budget for 1992-93 (paragraph 140.80) for an International Symposium on Child Labour, which was to be mainly financed by extra-budgetary funds. This was to have been an open meeting attended by representatives of governments, employers'
and workers’ organisations as well as non-governmental organisations and scholars, and would be organised in collaboration with UNICEF and UNESCO.

4. The Director-General now proposes that the original idea of a symposium, the purpose of which would be only to provide for exchanges of views and experiences, should be replaced by a higher level, policy-making meeting which might in addition be expected to adopt conclusions (perhaps in the form of a Declaration and Programme of Action on Child Labour) on the measures to be taken to give effect to international labour standards on this issue. Such a meeting, which might be called a World Congress on the Elimination of Child Labour, would be held in early 1994; it would be a fitting culmination to the interdepartmental project on child labour and would lay the basis for a more vigorous campaign and more effective practical action to combat child labour at the national and international levels. It would be organised in collaboration with the United Nations, UNICEF and UNESCO.

5. Some preliminary suggestions are set out below concerning the agenda, composition, organisation and financing of such a Congress. If the Governing Body agrees to the principle of such a Congress, the Director-General will undertake consultations with potential donors and with other organisations and submit more detailed and specific proposals at a later stage.

**Agenda**

6. A specific agenda will be proposed at a later stage, following consultations with the United Nations, UNICEF and UNESCO, but can be expected to cover the following themes:

- Child labour: Current reality and trends.
- The socio-economic causes of child labour.
- Abuse of human rights and violence against children.
- Issues of law and practice: Application of international standards and enforcement of minimum age legislation.
- An overview and assessment of national policies and programmes against child labour.
- Child labour and compulsory education.
- Elimination of child labour in hazardous work.
- Non-formal education, vocational training and apprenticeship programmes.
- The role of employers’ and workers’ organisations in combating child labour.
- The role of non-governmental organisations in the campaign against child labour.

**Composition**

7. It is envisaged that there would be 100 participants, whose expenses (except for government participants from industrially advanced countries) would be paid for by the ILO, other international organisations and outside donors, as follows:

- 60 Ministers or senior officials from Ministries of Labour (20), Education (20) and Social Welfare (20);
- 20 representatives of employers’ organisations;
- 20 representatives of workers’ organisations.

8. The Governing Body of the ILO would decide on the countries from which Ministers of Labour (or senior officials from Ministries of Labour) would be invited, and would designate the employer and worker representatives who would be nominated by their respective groups in accordance with the usual practice. The Director-General would consult the United Nations, UNICEF and UNESCO in designating the countries from which Ministers of Education and Social Welfare (or senior officials from those Ministries) would be invited.

9. In addition, representatives of a limited number of selected non-governmental organisations active in the defence and protection of working children would be invited by the Governing Body to participate in the discussions in accordance with the usual procedures and practices governing the participation of such organisations in ILO meetings. Proposals for the designation of such NGOs would be made after consultation with the United Nations, UNICEF and UNESCO.

**Organisation and preparation of the Congress**

10. The Congress would be of five days duration. Subject to the Governing Body’s agreement in principle to the holding of the Congress, the Director-General intends to explore the possibility of holding it in a developing country; if this did not prove practicable, the Congress could be held in Geneva.

11. The main document to be considered by the Congress would be a background paper prepared by the ILO synthesising available information and the results of the work carried out under the interdepartmental project and IPEC. In addition, the UN, UNICEF and UNESCO would be invited to submit papers on selected themes.

12. A Congress of this nature will have to be very carefully prepared. In particular, if it is to adopt a major policy statement, it would be desirable for a small, but representative group to advise on the content of a draft statement to be submitted to the Congress. For this purpose, the Director-General may examine the possibility of including provision for a preparatory meeting for the Congress when he makes further proposals for activities to be financed from the Programme flexibility reserve.

**Budget and finance**

13. The cost of holding the Congress is estimated at approximately $650,000 (if held in Geneva) or $900,000 (if held in New Delhi - which is a purely illustrative example in case the Congress were held in a developing country) - not including the cost of a preparatory meeting which would be held...
and workers' organisations as well as non-governmental organisations and scholars, and would be organised in collaboration with UNICEF and UNESCO.

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biennium. The Director-General intends to include some provision in his
Programme and Budget proposals for 1994-95 to cover some of these costs; but
in view of the constraints within which those proposals will have to be
prepared, most of the resources would have to come from outside the Regular
Budget. The Director-General intends to approach the UN, UNESCO and UNICEF to
seek some contribution from them (for instance, to finance the participation
of representatives designated by them), as well as some multi-bilateral
donors. In this connection, certain donors who have been contacted in a very
preliminary manner have expressed interest in making a contribution to the
costs of such a Congress. The prospects of obtaining sufficient
extra-budgetary support to enable the Congress to be held are therefore very
good.

14. The Governing Body may wish -

(a) to agree in principle to the holding of a World Congress on the
Elimination of Child Labour in early 1994;

(b) to authorise the Director-General to consult the United Nations, UNICEF
and UNESCO on the modalities of their cooperation in the organisation of
such a Congress;

(c) to authorise the Director-General to pursue his contacts with donors with
a view to obtaining extra-budgetary financial support for the Congress;

(d) to authorise the Director-General to undertake the necessary
consultations with a view to identifying a country whose government may
wish to host the Congress;

(e) to request the Director-General, in the light of the above consultations:

(i) to make some provision, if necessary, in his Programme and Budget
Proposals for 1994-95 for the holding of the Congress; and

(ii) to submit precise proposals concerning the composition, agenda,
organisation and financing of the Congress to the Governing Body at
a forthcoming session.


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