

**Sixteenth sitting**

Wednesday, 17 June 2009, 2.35 p.m.

*Presidents: Mr Zellhoefer, Mr Hossain  
and Mr Palma Caicedo***REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (CONT.)****The PRESIDENT (Mr ZELHÖEFER)**

It is my honour and privilege to call to order the 16th sitting of this session of the International Labour Conference. The general discussion is now open.

*Original Spanish: Mr TOMADA (Minister of Labour,  
Employment and Social Security, Argentina)*

First of all, I believe that we can congratulate ourselves on 90 years of work for social justice within the ILO. This anniversary is taking place at a unique moment, enabling the ILO to continue the global exchange of ideas on the current financial and employment debacle.

The fact that the world is an integrated place means that the policies, main actors and ideas are changing significantly all over the world. We are experiencing a period of social discussion on the causes of the crisis and possible solutions. Previous explanations and approaches are no longer applicable. The ideological debate has never been more opportune because it is not poor management, poor administrators or bad decisions that are responsible for the crisis, rather it is the bad ideas.

The failure of the single approach confirms the need for a policy involving a new social contract. The argument for the State playing an active role through regulation and the possibility of intervention is growing stronger given the collapse of the neoconservative philosophy on minimum state intervention.

We believe that we need to continue with a growth strategy that involves the government in the organization of the markets and active policies, macroeconomics, industrial policies and labour relations, as well as in technological innovation.

We are speaking from more than six years of experience in managing public policy in a particularly sensitive area, that of production and labour. Increasing and improving the quality of employment are still our principles of organization – the foundation for our country's development – as well as economic growth with an emphasis on industry, combating poverty through the distribution of wealth, combating inequality and fostering greater equality of opportunity.

Decent work is the fundamental tool that makes it possible to combine these objectives. On the one

hand, jobs become the main means of inclusion in society, and decent work becomes a crucial tool for better wealth distribution. Work, then, needs to be at the heart of any decision that is taken in relation to responses to the crisis. As the President of Argentina said in this very room, wealth does not create jobs: jobs create wealth.

The Report of the Director-General and the conclusion of this Summit, the Global Jobs Pact, as well as the measures taken by some governments, are fully consistent with what our country has been putting into practice since 2003. The measures to maintain the domestic market, improve employment and wages, support the manufacturing system and public investment in infrastructure, extend social protection, collective bargaining and social dialogue in order to maintain sources of employment are just some of the activities that have borne fruit and which will continue to do so.

Today, society is crying out for enterprises to align themselves with public policies and multiply their efforts to protect jobs. That is why we are urging enterprises, when it comes to taking decisions, to opt for restructuring rather than dismissals and suspensions, to compensate for their current losses with previous gains, and to choose dialogue and support growth.

We ask the workers to continue defending their values and to understand the importance of change in order to strengthen sensible dialogue. In short, as in 1949, we wish to affirm that labour is not a commodity.

Argentina's participation alongside Brazil and Mexico in the G20 is an historic opportunity to make the voice of the region heard. Latin Americans want to build an economy with a human face, leaving behind the economic orthodoxy that has led to the collapse even of the North American economy. We want to participate in building a new international financial architecture, as well as a strategy for social cohesion.

Argentina agreed with Brazil's call for the G20 to recognize the ILO at the same level as the Bretton Woods institutions. This will contribute to ensuring that the UN system has a consistent basis on which to effectively pursue social justice.

In closing, we cannot return to the recipes of the past and expect different outcomes from the same old methods. We must not remain indifferent. We need to defend employment. Employment is the foundation of sustainable economic growth. Let us reject those who unscrupulously dismiss workers,

those who try to sow fear, and speculators. Let us channel State financial resources directly into the real economy. Let us argue in all forums that labour shall not pay for the crisis, and that it is time to strengthen social protection, not weaken it by limiting public spending.

While we need to make advances in productivity, we also need to make advances in humanity. As we have said many times, the crisis can be an opportunity, but it can never be an excuse for making adjustments through dismissals or diminishing the quality of existing jobs.

The Global Jobs Pact is the consecration at the global level of these ideas. Today, more than ever, we need consensus, dialogue and a commitment to rejecting the approaches of the past. The world has to be different after this crisis.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr CARVALHO DA SILVA (Worker, Portugal)*

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I would like to thank the Director-General for his excellent Report and the superb standard of work that he has led us to expect.

The economic and financial policies which led to the current crisis used the manipulation of concepts to impose sacrifices on workers and on peoples, intensified inequalities and attacks on the rights of workers and their organizations, and imposed an unfair and violent distribution of wealth.

The crisis has its causes and there are people who are responsible for it. In Portugal, as in many other countries, we saw damaging forms of management, financial manipulation and cases of corruption. But those responsible continue to enjoy impunity while workers are faced with the prospect of the highest rate of unemployment in recent decades and increasing gaps in social provision.

In order to get out of the crisis, it is essential that we discard these policies and reject financial fundamentalism. A fair globalization, such as the Director-General has been advocating for more than a decade, means that values of universality and multiculturalism have to be affirmed everywhere in the system of multilateral relationships. Effective regulatory bodies have to be restructured and made operational, work that enhances workers' dignity has to be enhanced, and the productive sector has to be developed, with a particular focus on small enterprises.

It is both essential and possible to create large numbers of jobs and boost the status of existing employment, as long as new policies are adopted along the following lines.

First, wealth has to be used in a different way, becoming more closely geared to useful investment for the whole of society. This means putting the brakes on financial speculation, doing away with tax havens, regulating the role and operations of multinationals, reorienting the role of the State towards serving the people, adjusting and improving regulatory bodies, and creating balance and fairness in world trade.

Second, new employment policies are needed based on the material production of goods and services that are useful for the development of society.

Third, the role of public service must be redefined and developed in order to improve the effectiveness of the administration and ensure the provision of social rights, because the right to health, social protection, education and training can never be reduced to a market commodity.

Fourth, labour regulation must incorporate economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. Collective agreements and labour-related pledges can no longer be used as a means of subjecting the workers to the paradigms and objectives of the neo-liberal economy, aimed at enriching the few. We have to accept the concept of harmonization in progress – something so dear to the ILO – in a context in which increased life expectancy, migration flows and the quantitative and qualitative increase in women's presence in the workplace should be seen as factors of progress and victories which can create greater equality among all human beings.

Fifth, the wages of workers in developed countries must not be reduced and wages across the globe must be improved, both of which are perfectly possible with a fairer distribution and redistribution of wealth.

Sixth, we need to have concerted opposition to job insecurity and instability, which has worsened as a result of amendments in recent years making labour legislation more flexible, as happened in my country, and we need a serious commitment to the ILO's objectives on decent work.

Finally, I would like to say that, if we continue to offer young people nothing but insecurity, unemployment, low wages and the threat of worse social protection than that enjoyed by their parents, we will not have found a solution to the crisis.

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*Mr POTTER (Employer, United States)*

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The US Employers' delegation welcomes the opportunity to address the important issues that the Director-General has raised in his Report to the Conference, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*.

We meet in Geneva at a critical moment, with challenges on many fronts. Some of these are new and stem from the economic crisis but others, such as the worst forms of child labour, forced labour and poverty, have been with us since long before the crisis. Employment and jobs are, rightly, the major topic of this Conference. There is an urgent need to prevent the global recession from becoming a long-term crisis of confidence among the billions of people – employers and workers alike – who are the engine for growth and development. We need a strong and clear message coming out of this Conference that workers and employers can, and should, have confidence in the future.

The current financial crisis is primarily caused by a failure of governance in the finance sector, not a failure of markets generally. As we learned from the Great Depression 80 years ago, protectionism and over-regulation of the markets will be counterproductive to sustainable economies, jobs growth, poverty alleviation, productivity growth and a rising standard of living. Sustainable economies require an enabling business and workplace environment with up-to-date labour standards. Labour ministries have a critical role. In the Committee on the Application of Standards we see the gap between ratification of ILO standards and their implementation in law and practice. Closing this implementation gap should be one of the highest priorities of the ILO. The joint ILO-International Finance Corporation (IFC) Better Work programme is an excellent example of a multi-stakeholder, shared objectives approach that is having measurable results.

Another critical role for the ILO in the economic crisis is in helping constituents with labour market

reform, designed to promote employment security. This means encouraging governmental support for economic recovery and job creation, by reducing labour market rigidities; ensuring adequate social safety nets and providing incentives to work, invest in skills, education and training; enabling labour mobility and investing in public services.

Expanding economic opportunity, raising productivity and increasing growth are crucial for alleviating poverty and are especially crucial now. In many developing countries, achieving these goals requires the creation of a more inclusive business model that directly integrates low-income people as entrepreneurs, suppliers, distributors, retailers, employees and consumers. It also requires more collaborative approaches between large companies, small enterprises, public sector entities, civil society organizations and the poor themselves. These are necessary to address the market failures and the governance gaps that currently exclude or disadvantage many small enterprises and low-income households from prospering.

In my company's business system, we facilitate manual distribution centres, MDCs, in 25 developing countries that distribute the vast majority of our products. MDCs are independently owned, low-cost, manual operations created to service emerging urban retail markets where classic distribution models are not effective or efficient. In Ethiopia and Tanzania, for example, MDCs account for 80 per cent of our sales. MDCs rely on the entrepreneurial efforts of thousands of small-business owners who work directly with local bottlers to distribute our products, while also benefiting from training and other assistance that is provided. To date, this business-led approach has created over 2,500 MDCs in Africa, generating over 12,000 jobs, of which nearly 30 per cent are owned by women, and more than US\$500 million in annual revenues. MDC owners and employees support an estimated 48,000 dependants.

Many of the issues before this Conference are both complex and politically sensitive. At this critical moment, we must join together to strengthen the foundations for job growth and a rising standard of living for all across our globe.

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*Original German: Ms DEMBSHER (Government, Austria)*

I would like to congratulate everyone who has been involved in drawing up the draft Global Jobs Pact submitted to us today. Austria is in favour of its adoption. The Global Jobs Pact, in our view, is a key contribution on the part of the ILO to dealing with the economic crisis.

What is important here is that, on the one hand, the Pact covers a broad range of issues and has a global focus, while it is also strongly focused on the next steps that have to be taken and allows for implementation at the local level in a way that takes account of different requirements and the resources available. Austria also welcomes the emphasis on social dialogue as an important instrument to develop and implement packages of measures rapidly and effectively.

The economic crisis, which started as a financial crisis, spread to the real economy and subsequently led to social and political destabilization in many regions, was also exacerbated by increasing income inequality over the past few years. At the moment, the focus on employment and income security – not least through comprehensive social protection – is

important not just from a social policy standpoint but also from the standpoint of economic policy, in order to address plummeting domestic demand and prevent entire social groups from being cut off from the formal labour market.

Social protection measures enable consumption by low-income groups, which generally have a greater tendency to consume. Active labour market policy has a key part to play in easing transitions through support in vocational guidance and training. Unemployment benefits, coupled with targeted active labour market policy measures that encourage people to work, reduce the risk of people being socially marginalized and pushed into the informal sector in the long term. They also improve the capacity of the labour market to respond when recovery comes, thus also consolidating the upturn. In the longer term, targeted expenditure on the support for the unemployed, or for social protection, can even reduce the burden on the public purse.

However, social and labour market policy measures alone will not be enough to deal with the worst economic crisis the world has seen in decades. A determining factor will be the synergy between social, employment and economic policy, guided by the Decent Work Agenda.

Austria attaches a great deal of importance to improving coherence in cooperation between international organizations. We are pleased to see that the ILO is untiringly pursuing dialogue with the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and many other UN organizations in order to reshape international economic and financial policy in a more socially acceptable manner.

The crisis cannot be used as an excuse for weakening labour and social protection. The ILO standards system is very important in this regard, since it provides internationally binding standards which should be taken into account not only by States, but also by the policies of other institutions. ILO expertise would bring clear added value to the shaping of IMF and World Bank programmes.

Austria supports enhancing the flexibility of IMF credit lines. We very much hope that the IMF will use the flexibility it has been granted by its members to agree with borrowers on programmes which, apart from enterprises, also support the labour market, assistance to the unemployed and social security systems. The granting of credit should not go hand in hand with huge cuts in social welfare, because we agree with the Director-General's analysis that social support measures do in fact pay.

To overcome the crisis, we should turn to tried and tested concepts, instruments and procedures. The social market economy, shaped by social dialogue, was the Austrian recipe for positive social development after the Second World War. The crisis has shown that market mechanisms require strong social countermeasures by the State or by the international community.

Austria, therefore, calls for a joint effort for an international social market economy, for a world trade system that takes the social aspects into account, for a socially oriented international financial system that will help developing countries build up their economies and support and promote employment with social security, and for international regulation and supervision of financial markets and capital flows.

This is how we see the way out of the crisis. Let us work enthusiastically together for a better world that is more resilient in the face of crises.

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Mr TROGEN (*Employer, Sweden*)

The crisis has to be dealt with now, not later. I would like to thank the Director-General for his comprehensive Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*.

In the debate during the Conference, many views on the crisis have been shared and considered, and many solutions have been proposed. Whatever the final outcome of the work will be, we, the Nordic employers, underline that any response to the crisis must be focused on meeting the needs of the ILO constituents, as identified by them. That requires, in turn, a flexible approach, as the conditions vary from country to country, and it seems as if the draft Global Jobs Pact has that kind of content.

Recovery of the economy, when it comes, and it will come, must be led by the private sector. A competitive, confident and efficient private sector is a large part of the solution and not a part of the problem. Enterprises, particularly smaller ones, create jobs, and their recovery has to be the starting point. All arms of policy need to be directed to the goal of achieving a healthy private sector. Only the private sector can rebuild economic losses and restore employment.

Therefore, the ILO, as well as other actors, must put the needs of enterprises at the heart of recovery measures. To save jobs, you need to promote business and businesses. To create jobs, you need to give enterprises confidence to employ. Initiatives that fail to meet the requirements of enterprises will not work.

The 2007 International Labour Conference conclusions on sustainable enterprises set the objectives very clearly: amongst others, a well-functioning financial system and, in particular, addressing small and medium-sized companies. The conclusions of the 8th European Regional Meeting in Lisbon this year had much of the same content.

Dialogue between employers and employees, as well as dialogue between social partners, plays an important role in times of crisis in ensuring fair and inclusive arrangements. In countries with strong social partners, such as the Nordic countries, these actors can also certainly contribute in a bipartite way to alleviating the current crisis and preventing further crises.

There are short-term as well as longer-term solutions. In Sweden, for instance, social partners in the manufacturing industries have delegated rights to local partners, at the enterprise level, to decide on reducing working hours and/or providing training, with a corresponding reduction of wages of a maximum of 20 per cent. Numerous similar local agreements have already saved many jobs in Sweden. The same partners have had, for more than ten years, an agreement comprising, on the one hand, common assessments and views on what are important factors for a sustainable industry and, on the other, a negotiating agreement on how to act in wage negotiations in order to achieve a reasonable wage increase, depending on the macroeconomic conditions.

Another well-known example is the Danish flexicurity system, which has been in place for several years and can now contribute to mitigating the consequences of the crisis in that country.

Of course, governments play a crucial role in alleviating and preventing crises. In many countries they act on a tripartite basis, in others they act on their own. Labour market regulations must provide flexibility, making it easier for an enterprise to react quickly to an economic downturn and, equally importantly, to facilitate new employment when needed. Policy choices based on the principles of what is likely to work, not what will hopefully work, should be promoted.

Labour market reforms are necessary in times of crisis and crises may offer an opportunity for change. After the recession of the 1970s and early 1980s, a lack of labour market reforms in a number of European countries kept unemployment stubbornly high.

Lastly, the ILO, by focusing on its core mandate, can play an important role in assisting the real economy actors with strategies to combat the crisis in labour markets. There are several tools in the ILO catalogue that can be used. The main tool to respond to the crisis, in the view of the employers, is the Global Employment Agenda. The employers advocate refocusing and updating this policy framework within the context of crisis response strategies for the ILO constituents.

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*Original Russian: Mr SAFONOV (Government, Russian Federation)*

I would like to congratulate the International Labour Office for the organization and timely conducting of the ILO Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis which has been a key stage in developing international coordination in social and labour policy. The Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, has very important and interesting points in his Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work*. The outcomes of the Summit will be reflected in the Global Jobs Pact, which we also hope will be adopted by this Conference.

The drop in output in many countries is accompanied by a drop in tax revenues, a drop in employment income through loss of jobs and income or through part-time employment and a drop in real incomes in the population, particularly for those on fixed incomes (that is, pensioners and workers in the state sector). These problems are especially severe in countries with high inflation.

The challenges posed by the economic and financial crisis and its economic and social consequences mean that countries now stand before a difficult choice. How do we manage social policy with such severely limited resources?

Either we take corrective action by making cuts in social programmes – which will likely meet with an extremely negative reaction from the population – or we meet the existing social commitments of governments in the light of uncertain macroeconomic conditions.

Obviously, social policy must seek to adapt to changing conditions. At the same time, we believe that the complexity of the current economic situation and the related problems in drawing up and implementing budgets should not be used as an excuse for cutting previously agreed state social commitments.

Social policy in the Russian Federation in 2009 and beyond will be aimed at overcoming the main challenge: to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the population and forestall destructive processes in the social sphere. One very important point is that, in

optimizing State revenues in the light of the changed parameters of the federal budget for 2009 and beyond, the Government will not be cutting its existing social spending commitments.

In the context of the anti-crisis measures taken by the Russian Federation in 2009, special attention is being paid to preserving employment, fighting unemployment and developing continuing education and retraining programmes for workers at risk of redundancy.

The financial and economic crisis has aggravated the difficulties on the labour market – registered and overall unemployment levels, for instance, have risen drastically – but at the same time the anti-crisis measures taken by the Russian Federation are already having positive results: in the last few months, unemployment in the Russian Federation has begun to fall again.

The Government has taken a raft of measures to ease tensions on the labour market.

At the beginning of 2009 unemployment benefit was raised by one and a half times. Unemployed people now receive benefit not only if they have been made redundant, but also if they have chosen to leave their jobs themselves as a result of the economic crisis.

The Government now systematically monitors the situation on regional labour markets.

The federal budget has provided additional resources for the development of proactive employment promotion programmes. Proactive employment policies have been drawn up and are in operation in every region of the Russian Federation.

As part of these regional programmes, preparatory occupational training will be provided for 216,500 workers currently facing the threat of redundancy.

More than 1 million temporary jobs will be created for workers at risk of unemployment, while internships will be set up for over 50,000 workers.

More than 15,900 citizens moving from one place to another for permanent or temporary work will also receive targeted financial support.

No fewer than 52,000 people will receive financial support for entrepreneurial activities. This will create at least 150,000 jobs. The implementation of these measures will ensure an effective employment policy.

It is also important to bear in mind that the problems of employment cannot be resolved effectively without the development of social partnership. For its part, the Government of the Russian Federation has signed a pact with trade union associations and the employers' organizations to carry out effective work in all enterprises to support employment.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the role of the International Labour Organization today is extremely important from the point of view of sharing the experience that countries have gained, and ensuring that expert work is carried out on the programmes drawn up in the context of the G8 and the G20.

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Mr MLECZKO (*Government, Poland*)

When the previous session of the International Labour Conference was closed, probably not many of us expected that this session would be – to such an extent – overwhelmed by the crisis.

We are meeting to exchange our views and to share the ideas of how to mitigate the negative consequences of the crisis. But this Conference also gives us an opportunity for mutual inspiration on

how to build a better future. When so many people lose their jobs and so many households are on the edge of their financial stability, what does a “better future” mean? A better future for people – for women and men – for the economy, for different countries in the globalized world. The current economic crisis constitutes a serious challenge for all of us. The strength and scope of its influence vary from country to country. Worldwide, women and men are, and will be, affected differently. This is important to recognize when addressing the crisis. Perhaps the current crisis should constitute an additional incentive to implement significant reforms.

In 2008, Poland recorded economic growth. Our GDP is still positive. The unemployment rate, despite a certain increase, still remains lower in comparison to the same period of time last year and is lower than the current average for the European Union countries. However, despite the generally advantageous economic situation in Poland, the effects of the crisis are visible. That is why employers and employees, in order to avoid cumulative redundancies and the loss of human resources, undertake steps aimed at greater flexibility of employment. As the policy-makers, we do our best to assist them.

In November 2008, the Government of Poland adopted the Stability and Development Plan containing a number of measures to sustain public finances and stabilize the financial system as well as to support investments. We know how expensive and difficult it is to get already unemployed people back on the labour market. So, keeping and creating new jobs remains crucial.

For that reason, the Government of Poland introduced a set of legal and financial measures to support people in finding, keeping or changing their jobs; to support employers in safeguarding workplaces; to support workers over 50 years of age into the labour market; to counteract collective redundancies; and to promote collective bargaining.

We created the Social Solidarity Reserve to have, in an emergency, sources of money when it is necessary to help groups of people who are in unexpected economic troubles. Worth mentioning is also the legal and financial instrument created for people who have lost their jobs, that is temporary State support for paying off their mortgages.

Reaching a wide consensus is the key issue for the implementation of actions. As the Director-General, Juan Somavia, pointed out, especially under current circumstances, we have to make social dialogue work. That is exactly what we are trying to do in Poland. We consider social and civil dialogue as the best way of relieving many tensions and recovering from the crisis. We believe that both the social partners and the Government understand the need to handle emerging problems together.

Let me give you an example. Our social partners, three months ago, submitted to the Government a 13-point anti-crisis package of measures. It consists basically of such solutions as greater flexibility in working time and the co-financing by the Government and the employers of jobs at risk. Based on this fundamental agreement, the Government prepared legislative solutions which, after being discussed with the social partners, were presented just a few days ago in an Act on the mitigation of economic crisis effects, as well as amendments to the Act on Personal Income Taxes. We are working together; we are tackling the crisis as fast as possible, but, at the same time, we should bear in mind

public finances while taking short-term measures. It is our common responsibility.

Of course, the ideal solution would be to convert the crisis into an opportunity. But, we do not live in an ideal world. Today, when there is a shortage of opportunities, we need to focus especially on the idea of solidarity. The time of the crisis is a testing time for everyone – for governments, social partners, international organizations and the people. We understand solidarity as a commitment and taking action. This action is also about training, education, health care and social aid. We believe that such actions taken during the crisis could help the people to make better use of opportunities when they appear.

Finally, I would like to say that, as we know, we live at the border of cultures and speak and think in many languages. More and more of us are on the road, regardless whether the journey takes place in a geographical or cultural sense.

Facing the crisis, we should avoid protectionism, which, quoting the Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeld, in *The Financial Times*: “is never the solution if we are going to get a long-term recovery in the labour market”. We should support initiatives for a sustainable way out of the crisis, such as the Global Jobs Pact.

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Ms POSKIPARTA (*State Secretary, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland*)

I would like to start by thanking the ILO for choosing the jobs crisis as the main theme of this year’s International Labour Conference.

Why is it so important that we have devoted almost three weeks to the crisis? It is because the ILO, on its tripartite basis, can best take into account the labour market needs and the social aspects of the crisis. Rapid measures are now needed to counter unemployment. At the same time, the prevention of negative social impacts related to poverty and exclusion is very important. I am pleased that the Conference has agreed on a common approach for taking forward the Decent Work Agenda in times of crisis, without losing the benefits of globalization. Furthermore, gender issues also have important links with the jobs crisis.

Investing in growth and employment through research, innovation and training is our priority. Our Government has urged enterprises to avoid giving notice to their employees. This calls for corporate social responsibility. In the future, when the crisis is over, employers will need the same professional and committed workers.

Together with the social partners we have developed our own model of flexibility. We call it “the golden triangle of flexicurity”. It is based on easy transitions between jobs and training, together with adequate social benefits, reintegration to work and improving the quality of working life.

Instead of terminating a working relationship, we can use more flexible measures, such as a temporary lay-off. A temporary lay-off is part of flexicurity. It is a temporary interruption of work and pay based on a decision made by the employer, without affecting the employment relationship in other respects. The reasons for temporary lay-offs have to be financial or related to production. The employer may lay off the worker for a certain period of time or reduce his or her regular weekly or daily working hours. During the temporary lay-off the workers receive unemployment benefit. In addition, the em-

ployer can receive financial support if the workers benefit from retraining.

Anticipating new skills demands and providing accurate training is more important than ever. Without targeted, short-term actions unemployment may become long-term, leading to discrimination and even exclusion from the labour market. Social security systems, although important safety nets in critical times, should include incentives to work. Getting people involved in productive work is an investment on a personal level, but also benefits society as a whole.

It is especially important to help young people to find work. Experience shows that young people will suffer most when fewer jobs are available. We have decided to give priority to young jobseekers in our labour offices. We want to guarantee training or an introductory job for every young jobseeker under 25 years of age.

In spite of all the problems of today, we have to think long-term. It is essential to maintain public expenditure and retain basic services now and in the future. We have to make sure that working conditions are such that people will stay in work without being discriminated against on account of age, gender or ethnic background.

The ILO Green Jobs Initiative includes the same elements that we, in Finland, find very important. Social sustainability is an integral part of sustainable development. New jobs are crucial for strengthening this dimension, but at the same time we should ensure that basic labour standards are met. We need coherent policies, both nationally and globally. The ILO’s contribution is well recognized in the specific policy areas of its expertise. The Global Jobs Pact has elements that we think are very adequate. Combining short-term responses with a long-term approach and working closely together with the social partners for recovery is certainly the best way forward. This calls for cooperation and solidarity from all of us.

(*Mr Hossain takes the Chair.*)

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Original Hungarian: Mr BORSIK (*Worker, Hungary*)

It is a great privilege, for me, to speak on behalf of Hungarian workers and their representatives at this Conference.

Hungary is also living through a financial and economic recession with all its possible drawbacks. Redundancies and downsizing have had an adverse impact on Hungarian workers. The economic crisis has not yet reached its peak. After several corrections, the Hungarian Government now expects GDP to contract by 6.7 per cent. Under the circumstances, it is very important to strengthen the role of the ILO as an organization that drafts international standards, bearing in mind globalization and the dramatic deterioration of the situation of workers.

Hungarian employees and their representatives did not welcome the planned amendment of the EU Working Time Directive. The amendment greatly improves the situation of employers, but undermines that of workers. Hungarian workers need an effective directive without an opt out clause.

In addition to a growing trend towards unemployment, there are other warning signals in the Hungarian labour market. Employers’ associations, chambers of commerce and the Government have decided to establish a reconciliation forum for the economy. Although the aim of the forum is to dis-

cuss the future of Hungary's people and economy, workers' representatives have been intentionally left out of negotiations. As a consequence of this failure to hold tripartite negotiations, there has been a loss of confidence in this forum. The people of Hungary now expect that any government measures should involve trade unions and should be able to re-establish a democratic balance, which has been given up in favour of market considerations. Workers and their representatives would like to ensure that a crisis of such dimensions will never be repeated and they never want to see a rise in inequalities encouraged by the Government.

Hungarian employees and their representatives expect that any programme to create better jobs should be promoted. In these critical times, respect for gender equality and equal opportunities is of major importance. It is essential to strengthen workers' rights, as is called for by workers and unions, in particular through effective participation and social dialogue. We consider that social issues should be an integral part of any domestic or European policy. Workers and their representatives need industrial, economic and social democracy. Wage freezes and wage and pension cuts must be rejected. It is extremely important at this critical stage to strengthen a collective agreement system and network.

Allow me to say a few words on the amendment of legal standards. Current amendments relating to employment legislation are detrimental to workers, in particular as regards industrial relations and easier access to jobs. Such measures serve the interests of certain sectors of the economy, who are interested mainly in maintaining the crisis. These demands, among others, are also expressed in the Paris Declaration of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

You have heard a brief summary of the problems, demands and expectations which are shaping the lives of Hungarian workers and the activity of their unions. We consider that ILO activity and assistance is needed now more than ever before. The ILO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest is going to play an important role in this regard.

I wish the delegates of this 98th Session every success in their future work.

**REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES:  
SUBMISSION, DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL**

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The PRESIDENT

I now wish to interrupt the general discussion, in order to move on to the submission, discussion and approval of the report of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives. This report has been published in *Provisional Record* No. 12, and I call on the Committee's Chairperson, Ambassador Van Meeuwen of Belgium, to present it to us.

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*Original French: Mr VAN MEEUWEN (Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Belgium; Chairperson and Reporter of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives)*

It is my honour to submit to the Conference the report of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives. The report appears in *Provisional Record* No. 12 and contains the Committee's recommendations on the issues it considered. The five resolutions which the Committee proposes for adop-

tion by the Conference can be found at the end of the report.

The main item on the agenda of the Finance Committee was the proposed programme and budget for 2010–11. This was considered in detail three months ago at the 304th Session of the Governing Body. Following an in-depth discussion during that session and after subsequent discussions in the Finance Committee, it was decided to recommend a zero-growth budget for adoption by the Conference.

I am happy to inform you that throughout its discussion of this issue the Committee expressed strong support for the Organization. The report before you summarizes the opinions expressed by Members during the discussion. Many of them welcomed the improved structure and presentation of proposals for the programme and budget and expressed their support for the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and welcomed the progress made in results-based management.

The Committee also considered the urgent issue of the financing of the maintenance and renovation of the ILO buildings. Concerns were expressed at the fact that the ILO is increasingly dependent on donor resources, particularly during this period of economic crisis. Meetings were held in a climate of harmony and mutual understanding, and nearly all the participants supported the proposal for zero growth.

I therefore urge the Government, Employers' and Workers' groups to support wholeheartedly the resolution concerning the adoption of the programme and budget for 2010–11.

The Committee went on to examine the proposed scale of contributions to the regular budget of the ILO for 2010, which is based on the scale of the United Nations organizations for 2007–09 and which it recommends that the Conference adopt.

The Committee also examined the proposal concerning the assessment of contribution of Tuvalu to the regular budget of the ILO for 2008 and 2009. It recommends that the Conference adopt an annual assessment rate of 0.001 per cent.

The Committee had before it a proposal concerning the composition of the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO. The Committee unanimously accepted the recommendation of the Governing Body that the Conference renew the terms of office of Mr Seydou Ba (Senegal), Mr Guiseppe Barbagallo (Italy) and Ms Dolores Hansen (Canada) for three years.

Finally, the Committee examined the document concerning amendments to the Financial Regulations that are intended to facilitate the application of international accounting standards for the public sector. The Committee unanimously recommended that the Conference adopt the proposed amendments.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the members of the Committee and of the Secretariat, all of whom helped me greatly in my work.

I therefore recommend the report for adoption.

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The PRESIDENT

The floor is now open for discussion of the report.

If there are no calls for the floor, I propose that we proceed with the approval of the report, that is the summary of the Committee's discussions in paragraphs 1–61 of the report and its five appendices.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference approves the report of the Financial Committee?

*(The report – paragraphs 1 to 61 and its Appendices I to V – is approved.)*

We shall now proceed to the adoption of the resolutions contained in the report.

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2010–11 AND THE ALLOCATION OF THE BUDGET OF INCOME AMONG MEMBER STATES: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts the resolution concerning the adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2010–11 and the allocation of the budget of income among member States?

*(The resolution is adopted.)*

Under article 13.2(c) of the Constitution, this resolution will be put to a record vote, which will take place tomorrow, Thursday, 18 June, during the afternoon sitting.

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUDGET FOR 2010: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

We shall now move on to the resolution concerning the scale of assessments of contributions to the budget for 2010.

If there is no objection, may I take it the Conference adopts the resolution?

*(The resolution is adopted.)*

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF NEW MEMBER STATES: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

The next resolution is the resolution concerning the assessment of contributions of new member States. If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts this resolution?

*(The resolution is adopted.)*

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE COMPOSITION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

We shall now move on to the resolution concerning the composition of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization. If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts this resolution?

*(The resolution is adopted.)*

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING AMENDMENTS TO THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

The final resolution is the resolution concerning amendments to the Financial Regulations. If there are no objections, may I take that the Conference adopts this resolution?

*(The resolution is adopted.)*

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON GENDER EQUALITY: SUBMISSION, DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL**

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The PRESIDENT

The report of the Committee on Gender Equality is published in *Provisional Record* No. 13. I invite the Officers of the Committee to come up to the podium to present the report. They are: the Committee's Chairperson, Mr Fredrik Arthur; its Vice-Chairpersons, Ms Maria Fernanda Garza and Ms Barbara Byers; and the Reporter of the Committee, Ms Myra Hanartani.

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Ms HANARTANI (*Government, Indonesia; Reporter, Committee on Gender Equality*)

I have the privilege to present to you for adoption the report of the Committee on Gender Equality. This report provides an account of the efforts of the women and men members of this Committee, with a concise record of the sessions we had and the nature of the discussion. It also includes a draft resolution and conclusion for adoption by this session of the International Labour Conference. I hope you find that we have accurately reported on the work of the Committee.

For the record, there were 165 members on the Committee (82 Government, 30 Employer and 53 Worker members) at its first sitting on Wednesday 3 June 2009. This number changed throughout the week, with the highest number of attendees taking part during the opening sitting on the first day, when the total number of members increased to 184 (93 Government, 32 Employer and 59 Worker members).

For most of our sittings, the meeting room was completely full, such was the interest in the matters being considered by us, as reflected in Office Report VI. At times we were concerned that the room might have been too small for all those who wanted to take part in this historic discussion. Indeed, the discussion was historic, as it was the first time in nearly 25 years that gender equality had been considered as a stand alone item by the International Labour Conference. As for gender balance, as you can see when you look at the Officers of the Committee, female delegates dominated. In the Committee itself, however, the female to male ratio was more balanced. After all, while naturally much of the focus was on women in the world of work, a lot of time was devoted to the role of men in efforts to achieve gender equality in the world of work. In fact, a well-balanced section on men and gender equality is in the conclusions.

The Committee had 12 sittings, including our final sitting on Saturday 13 June 2009, when we adopted the Committee's reports and conclusions. Three of those sittings were night sittings, and the tripartite Drafting Group commenced its meeting in the morning of one day and finished in the morning of the following day. I share this with you in order to highlight the dedication and thoroughness of the work undertaken in this Committee.

The report before you shows the complexity of the issue dealt with – gender equality at the heart of decent work. The Committee demonstrated its commitment to addressing all the issues in a systematic way and we were extremely disciplined in our work given the time constraints. Yet, we did not cut corners or try and find quick solutions to the

matters of concern. Each point was given detailed attention and the voices of the tripartite group were heard.

The report consists of four parts. The first part, the introduction, has the record of the election of the Officers, the Office introduction to the report discussion items, and the opening statements of the Employers, Workers and Governments, as well as IGOs and NGOs who registered for this Committee. The second part of the report contains a comprehensive summary of our discussions and the third part records the amendment process and our final adopting sitting. The last part contains the resolution and the Committee's 58 conclusions.

Allow me to highlight just some of the issues we dealt with. First, the need to increase efforts to formalize the informal economy, where decent work deficits are the most serious, through a policy mix that takes into account all of the ILO's strategic objectives.

Second, the appreciation that gender equality at work is a matter of social justice and is anchored in both a rights-based and an economic efficiency approach.

Third, the benefits and costs of globalization and the understanding that globalization affects women and men differently and, therefore, gender analysis on policy development and impact assessment is needed.

Fourth, when considering the current economic crisis, the need to ensure that recovery packages take into account the impact on women and men and integrate gender concern in all measures.

Fifth, the importance of paying more attention to work-family reconciliation methods, including focusing on men's role in sharing family responsibilities.

Sixth, the need for the four strategic objectives of the ILO (employment, social protection, principles and rights at work, and social dialogue) to be implemented in a holistic way, as outlined in the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which places gender equality as cross-cutting in these objectives.

Seventh, the roles that governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations can play to advance gender equality in the world of work.

Eighth, what the ILO can do to give effect to the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization through its policies and programmes for promoting gender equality at the heart of decent work.

We only managed to develop this comprehensive report and its conclusions, which reflect common ground, because of one thing: social dialogue, the hallmark of the International Labour Organization. Tripartite dialogue got us to this point. While we may not have agreed on all that was being said, we respected each other's views. We were dignified in our responses and we had two Vice-Chairpersons from the social partners, Ms Barbara Byers and Ms María Fernanda Garza, who were untiring in their efforts to find solutions. They carefully focused on the end goal – the achievement of gender equality in the world of work.

Governments must also be recognized for their active contribution to the debate. They offered solutions, good practices and supported policy recommendations. We were also fortunate to have in our midst a number of very eloquent speakers who

made their speeches with the right amount of humour to break up any tension.

The work of the Committee was ably managed by our Chairperson, Mr Fredrik Arthur, the Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Norway. He steered the work of the Committee in a very skilled and balanced way. His leadership, diplomatic skills, encouragement and sense of humour, as well as his firm hand on the gavel, ensured that we used the limited time we had effectively, and that we completed our work as scheduled.

I would also like to acknowledge the help of the secretariat to our Committee, under the able guidance of the representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Jane Hodges. Their assistance to the members of this Committee, organizational support and dedication, helped us to get to where we are today, with a report and conclusions that do justice to our work.

Finally, I would like to recognize the work of the members of the secretariat: the interpreters, report writers and translators. They ensured that we had accurate texts to read during the Committee's regular work and, of course, finalized this report and its conclusions for consideration today.

With those remarks, I commend the report, its resolution and conclusion to the Conference for adoption.

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Mr ARTHUR (*Government, Norway; Chairperson of the Committee on Gender Equality*)

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I congratulate the Committee on Gender Equality on its report and conclusions, which were completed and adopted in 12 sittings, despite the limited time available.

I warmly thank the two Vice-Chairpersons and Government members for generating a congenial atmosphere, which demonstrated the ILO at its best, and for their commitment to social dialogue, allowing complicated and sometimes contentious issues to be resolved – by women and men in partnership – through consensus.

I am pleased to be able to say that, although the Committee's membership changed with each sitting, in the last substantive sitting there were equal numbers of women and men on the Government benches, and close to this on those of the Employers and Workers.

The conclusions – 58 in total – reaffirm that equality between women and men in the world of work is a core value of the ILO, and note that gender equality is recognized by the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization as a cross-cutting issue under the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda.

Although significant progress had been made since the last time the International Labour Conference discussed gender equality – almost 25 years ago – major challenges remain.

The conclusions note that as globalization has affected women and men differently, gender analysis is needed in policy development and impact assessments. To achieve policy coherence, there is a need for the ILO to examine international economic and financial policies in the light of gender equality.

During economic crises, not respecting the fundamental principles and rights at work would represent both a failure to uphold universally recognized rights and a failure of economic policy to ensure growth and recovery. The current crisis should be viewed as an opportunity to shape policies that also promote gender equality. In all discussions on re-

covery packages, both when designing them and when assessing their successes, women and men must have an equal voice. These packages need to take into account their impact on women and men, and integrate gender concerns in all measures.

The conclusions identify short-, medium- and long-term measures to mitigate the impact and avoid a recurrence of the crisis. Importantly, the ILO should promote policy coherence on issues of decent work and gender equality by leveraging international partnerships, notably within the UN system and with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Group of 8 (G8) and Group of 20 (G20), and strengthening partnerships with regional groups in areas of mutual interest in the field of gender equality.

The conclusions contain an urgent call for the universal ratification of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

According to the conclusions, the role of governments includes, among other things, demonstrating the political will to develop the legal policies and frameworks to make gender equality in the world of work a reality. This includes ratifying the relevant ILO Conventions on gender equality; securing affordable and good quality health, education and public services for all; developing, with the social partners, adequate policies for a better balance of work and family responsibilities for women and men; taking appropriate measures to formalize the informal economy; developing gender equality indicators with sex-disaggregated data; and ensuring, with the social partners, that women are equitably represented in tripartite bodies.

The role of employers' organizations includes, among others, stimulating entrepreneurship among women; assisting members to develop gender-sensitive workplace policies and measures; promoting the fundamental principles and rights at work among members, including through awareness raising, training and technical assistance on sex-based discrimination; and developing voluntary codes, conducting research and ensuring that data collected is sex-disaggregated.

The role of workers' organizations includes strengthening the representation of informal, migrant, rural and domestic workers; establishing concrete measures to ensure women's participation at all levels and in all processes of workers' organizations; ensuring that collective bargaining is approached through a gender lens; representing the workers' point of view from a gender perspective in discussions on issues such as legislative reform, labour inspection, courts and industrial tribunals; and building capacity and strengthening expertise on gender-related issues.

The conclusions also provide recommendations on the role of the ILO with a view to strengthening its policy and programme of work on gender equality. These recommendations are grounded in Conventions Nos 100 and 111, as well as in the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), the Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175), the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177) and, of course, the social dialogue instruments Conventions: the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention,

1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

There are many areas relating to the ILO's role, but I will highlight only a few here because of time constraints: focusing on decent work for women in export processing zones; monitoring the progress of the Global Employment Agenda in promoting gender equality; developing gender-sensitive HIV/AIDS work-related policy options; providing technical assistance to national social dialogue institutions to help them mainstream gender and strengthen national gender machineries; helping improve the sex-disaggregated data of labour market information systems; and fully involving the social partners in designing gender-sensitive Decent Work Country Programmes.

In closing, I would like to read you an excerpt of a text:

"... poverty is acute and widespread and the situation of women has in many cases worsened as a result of increasing landlessness and the departure of men seeking work in urban areas. Political disturbances are driving growing numbers of people out of their countries into refugee camps, whose population is often made up largely of women with their children. In many industrialized and developing countries, women are taking more than their share of the unemployment resulting from the severe economic recession which marred the later years of the decade."

This text is an excerpt from the conclusions of a Report entitled *Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment* from the 71st Session of the International Labour Conference, 25 years ago. Many similar barriers to the achievement of equal opportunity and treatment for women and men continue to this day. I have read it to you today in order to highlight a point made by one of the Vice-Chairpersons in the closing of our Committee last Saturday. We sincerely hope that these 2009 conclusions lead to results, so that the next time the International Labour Conference discusses gender equality, participants will say that we did our job well and that the ultimate result of our efforts today was great advances for equality between women and men in the world of work.

I would like to close by expressing my thanks to the large number of Office staff who assisted the Committee in its work, under the very able guidance of the representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Jane Hodges. The team worked long hours, but never compromised on quality. Ms Hodges' knowledge of the subject matter and her evident commitment to arranging a conducive environment for delegates to arrive at realistic and workable conclusions has greatly impressed me. I thank you all again.

I recommend this report and conclusions for adoption in the hope that women and men in the world of work really see a difference because of them.

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*Original French: Ms PERRON (Employer member, Canada)*

It is a pleasure for me to introduce, on behalf of Ms María Fernanda Garza, Vice-Chairperson of the Employers' group of the Committee on Gender Equality, the main points of our report.

First, María Fernanda, together with all of us, would most sincerely like to thank the Workers' group, its Vice-Chairperson, Ms Byers, and its secretariat, the Committee Chairperson, who was very

wise in guiding rather lively deliberations, the secretariat of the Employers' group, which gave us unfailing support, the members of the Employers' group who participated in the meetings, the Drafting Committee, the interpreters and, of course, the ILO.

Throughout the work of the Committee, the Employers demonstrated that they consider a diversified workforce to be the key to success in the world of work.

As you see, the employers are not extraterrestrials from Pluto. We share the same collective values of twenty-first century society. In short, the recognition of the fundamental right to equity for men and women is the object of consensus.

Without the contribution of women, who after all represent half of the world population, our endeavours are pointless, both from a social and business point of view.

On the basis of this belief, during Committee discussions, our group worked to emphasize the specific situation of women, who are frequently among the most vulnerable sectors of the working population.

The Employers are aware of the very many challenges posed by gender equality. But, rather than endlessly discussing the problems (or, as said by Mr Lula da Silva of Brazil during his statement on Monday, rather than crying over spilt milk), we felt that the Committee on Gender Equality should focus on solutions, results and responses that are appropriate to the situation in each country and the dynamic development of the private sector, while attaching priority to sustainable results. María Fernanda can be proud because this mission has been accomplished.

We worked in a spirit of cooperation with male and female workers, government representatives and the ILO staff. We never forgot that we have to achieve tangible results – tangible results that can above all be applied in various countries which are not all designed along the same models.

We worked in a very efficient way, which was necessary because of the little time at our disposal. But, this enabled us to focus on the essential aspects of our work. We all know about trying to do more, with less!

As Employers, we are very happy that the final conclusions of the report reflect the subjects that we consider to be closest to the heart of gender equality.

Throughout our discussions, which were sometimes rather difficult, we achieved consensus on the most important issues.

For instance, we recognized together that education, skills development and lifelong learning are still the essential elements for meeting the challenges of the labour market. We also believe that achieving a work–family balance is increasingly important for establishing gender equality at work. Lastly, we stress the importance of bringing as many types of work as possible into the formal economy.

We are also very happy that, during this month of June 2009, we have been able to confirm that gender equality is definitely on the ILO agenda, and that there is a very firm commitment to this ideal.

We strongly believe that the conclusions of the report are promising. Employers create jobs; they are prepared to play their part towards achieving gender equality in employment. To this end, the Employers' group intends to continue its coopera-

tion. We know that, in the world of work, it is not enough to have idealistic aspirations that are divorced from reality. Therefore, we have to make sure that the conclusions of our report are adapted to real life and implemented.

We believe that the ILO has a role to play; we believe that the tripartite formula is an advantage when it comes to ensuring that the measures taken are tangible, realistic, acceptable and accepted.

I would like to thank María Fernanda Garza and I would like to thank all participants.

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Ms BYERS (*Worker, Canada; Workers' Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Gender Equality*)

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Our discussion showed that removing sex discrimination at work does not necessarily result in gender equality. This discussion has been timely and overdue. It has been 24 years since this Conference last examined gender equality. With the current economic crisis, our discussion became even more urgent. Worldwide, large numbers of women encounter barriers in their access to decent jobs. They are likely to be the first to suffer the impact of the crisis; yet they may be among the last to benefit from any recovery.

While legislation has improved and women's access to rights has been enhanced, the implementation of equality provisions has been limited or even declining under globalization. Proactive support and enabling conditions are needed to move ahead and to ensure that increased equality in access leads to equality in outcomes.

Indeed, urgent measures are needed to address the accumulated and persisting disadvantages of working women, because they have the majority of precarious jobs, they have lower pay and low or no social security, and they have the greatest responsibility for care of children and dependent family members – they were already hit hard before the crisis. And all of this happens in spite of the significant progress in education achieved by women in all parts of the world.

It would be wrong to wholly attribute our current problems to the crisis. The truth is that, in spite of the work done over the past two decades, gender equality has not yet been achieved.

Our Committee reached consensus over the causes of discrimination in its various forms. There has been a shared view that achieving decent work for women is the main route for lifting them out of poverty and empowering their economic and social potential.

Promoting the Decent Work Agenda, based on full respect for international labour standards, has been recognized as a main tool to attain this objective. We discussed the policies and measures needed to remove obstacles to women's access to decent work, as well as the responsibilities of the ILO tripartite constituents. International labour standards, including ratification, implementation and monitoring of the four ILO key gender equality Conventions (Nos 100, 111, 156 and 183) and Conventions Nos 87, 98, 175 and 177, are major means for achieving gender equality. Implementation of Recommendation No. 198 is also essential.

We agree that Governments need to take bold steps to address the negative consequences of globalization and to prevent further discrimination against women, especially the most vulnerable.

The role of trade unions to better represent and voice the concerns of women, and the importance of

employers willing to share responsibilities in pursuing gender equality in the world of work, are key for lasting progress.

Many unions spoke about the need to examine the impact of international financial institutions and the importance of policy coherence on the equality agenda. Our discussions reminded me of the saying: we often sacrifice the important for the sake of the urgent. The dilemma is that policy tradeoffs between the urgent and the important may not take us where we want to go and where we need to go.

Our Committee's recommendations are consistent with the Global Jobs Pact emerging from the Committee of the Whole. While the crisis affects all workers, a gender lens is needed to address the specific impact on women.

Job recovery must take into account the economic and social needs of women. The crisis should not be used as a pretext to stop progress, nor to move backwards. There may be no better time than now to advance gender equality.

Achieving gender equality is about social justice, and we believe that equality is not expensive. Equality is a positive investment, bringing financial benefit to families, workplaces and communities. To use the language of economists, it is an automatic stabilizer. Boosting demand through improved income for women is fundamental for economic recovery. We strongly believe that women's progress will not be achieved nor sustained in a situation where the vast majority of women and men suffer the consequences of globalization, combined with the effects of the current crisis.

Trade unions do not want equality to be achieved through more men working in precarious conditions. We want more women and men to have stable, decent jobs, combined with public support for programmes to meet the needs of working women and men. We do not want to have the gender pay gap closed because more men get lower salaries. We want working women to receive equal pay for work of equal value.

The Worker's group believes that our Committee is putting forward a set of far-reaching conclusions that can serve as a basis for the future work of the ILO.

The conclusions highlight the need to develop public support for a physical, but also social, infrastructure that can both create jobs and help women to sustain jobs. They stress the importance of securing public services' provisions for childcare and care of dependants and maternity, paternity and parental provisions. They highlight the vital importance of establishing a basic social security floor, accessible to all, a minimum living wage that can have a particularly positive effect on women, and the collective bargaining that is a key tool for fair distribution of productivity gains and addressing the gender pay gap.

Freedom of association and collective bargaining provides for stability in employment. We all need stability and predictability. Governments want political stability, employers want stable environments for their businesses, and workers need stability for their work and families. The convergence of all three elements brings stability to societies and is fundamental for lasting peace.

Before ending, I have a comment on the process of the work of our Committee. To accommodate the work of the Committee of the Whole, we worked under a compressed time schedule. The Workers'

group recognized the need to do this on an exceptional basis. This has led to fewer opportunities for delegates to exercise their right to speak about the realities in their countries and to have their voice heard during the Conference.

Despite this, we were able to finalize our work because of the intensive, productive discussions held in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good spirit, which resulted in the constructive and solid consensus.

Finally, I would like to thank the Employers' group for their partnership in this great endeavour and, personally, to María Fernanda Garza, the Employers' Vice-Chairperson.

I would like to thank the Governments for their commitment that helped us reach common views in times of declining resources.

I would like to particularly thank our Chairperson and friend, Fredrik Arthur, whose firm and supportive leadership kept us focused, especially considering the challenge of the time constraints.

Above all, I would like to thank the Workers' group, who were our source of inspiration and support. It has been an honour and a privilege to be your spokesperson.

The work is not over. It is up to each of us to ensure that our organizations are taking up the challenge of our report, and the direction of the conclusions.

We recommend the Conference adopt this important report and conclusions and begin to act on them immediately.

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Ms PYKE (*representative, European Commission*)

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I am speaking on behalf of the European Commission. It is an honour to be participating in this plenary session. A whole generation has grown up since the last specific report and conclusions of the International Labour Conference on gender equality, so we welcome this opportunity to renew the commitment of all ILO constituents to drive the gender equality agenda forward.

The European Commission congratulates the ILO on its excellent work in preparing these discussions, and in particular for the comprehensive and innovative report produced by Jane Hodges and her team. The ILO plays an important role worldwide in promoting progress on workers' rights, the improvement of working conditions, social dialogue and the achievement of decent work for both women and men. The action proposed in the conclusions adopted today – applying gender mainstreaming in the four pillars of employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work – are crucial and concrete proposals.

In the European Union, gender equality is a fundamental value, enshrined in the Treaties and the subject of legislation that applies to all of our Member States. For many years, the European Commission has supported the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities, particularly in the workplace. And we draw inspiration from international developments, notably at United Nations level.

For example, the European Commission has applied a dual approach of specific actions for the promotion of women and gender mainstreaming of all policies since the Beijing Conference in 1995. This approach underpins the current roadmap for equality between women and men which covers the period 2006–10 and it will also underpin the new

strategy to be presented in 2010, and our gender concerns do not stop at the borders of the European Union: they are an integral part of our external policies and once again I would like to recall the full support of the European Commission for the achievement of the Decent Work Agenda inside the EU and throughout the world.

Gender equality is indeed a matter of both social justice and economic necessity, and the European Commission fully shares this view with the ILO and its constituents through the conclusions to be adopted today. For instance, promoting the participation of women in the formal labour market not only improves their social situation and economic independence; it also enables our societies to take full advantage of all the potential labour force, to use all the available skills and to reinforce the sustainability of our social protection systems. For these reasons, the European Commission promotes the integration of gender issues within the framework where our Member States coordinate their employment policies, namely the European Employment Strategy.

Gender equality is good for the economy, good for employment and good for fighting poverty. That is why, in the very severe economic situation we are facing globally, we need to be more vigilant than ever. If we forget the need to ensure equal opportunities in the short term, the cost in the long-term will be higher. For instance, it has been shown that women who lose their jobs in recessions generally take longer than men to find a new job.

I agree with the many who took the floor in the Committee on Gender Equality that gender inequality carries a cost that we just cannot afford to bear and we need to maintain the financial resources allocated to supporting gender equality. This indeed is the position of the European Union Advisory Committee on equal opportunities between women and men which adopted just last week an opinion on the gender dimension in the responses to the crisis. This opinion also points out that the economic crisis can be an opportunity to transform the nature of labour markets and to promote more gender equal outcomes in the future.

In the European Commission, much has been achieved in recent years and one area of action has been the improvement of the legal entitlement to family-related leave. Last October, we proposed improvements to two existing EU directives on maternity leave and on equal treatment for self-employed and their helping spouses and we drew inspiration in particular from the ILO instruments on maternity protection.

Today's conclusions emphasize how important it is to promote a better work-life balance for both women and men, and to better involve fathers in family responsibilities. In 2006, we began a consultation of the European social partners on this issue and last year they began to negotiate a revision of the existing parental leave entitlements within the European Union. I am happy to announce that tomorrow, they will sign an agreement to improve these rights so as, among other things, to encourage more fathers to take advantage of these rights, and the European Commission stands ready to make a proposal for legislation to give legal effect to that agreement in all Member States of the European Union.

This example shows the power of social dialogue, including at the level of a community of 27 very

different Member States. Within the European Union, social dialogue has become an essential tool for prosperity. But in order to be even more effective in terms of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, social dialogue needs to be more gender-balanced through its constituents. We therefore share the view expressed in the conclusions adopted today on the need to increase the share of women participating in social dialogue discussions.

The European Commission will fully support the implementation within the European Union of today's conclusions and encourages the ILO to report on progress.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share with you some of the activities being carried out within the European Commission with regard to gender equality.

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Ms KAUR (*Worker, India*)

Our discussion showed that gender equality is far from being achieved. Many women continue to hold low-quality and precarious jobs, the gender pay gap persists, they have less access to training and social security and are heavily concentrated in the informal economy, which is also known as the unorganized sector economy.

The impact of the global crisis on employment and its effect on gender is specifically spelt out in the informal economy. More women than men work in the informal economy, where decent work deficits are the most serious. Women also sometimes end up in forced labour.

The conclusions stress efforts to formalize the informal economy, in particular to benefit women. This requires a policy mix, taking into account all four ILO strategic objectives of principles and rights at work, employment, social protection, and social dialogue and tripartism.

Both the strengthening of women's participation in collective bargaining and the inclusion of gender issues in the bargaining process are needed to secure gender-sensitive bargaining outcomes.

Investing in women is actually investing in future nation building.

The conclusions of the Committee underline that the ILO should develop measurement systems to create incentives for progress in formalizing the informal economy, increasing the participation of women in the formal economy and increasing the proportion of women in the workforce.

Regarding social protection, it adds that the ILO should develop policy options to help constituents upgrade social security and social protection systems so that they are inclusive and take into account the needs of workers with family responsibilities, cover women in vulnerable situations and offer policy options to help formalize workers in the informal economy.

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Ms HART EDWARDS (*Employer, United States*)

Our Committee was composed of thoughtful and dedicated people who freely exchanged ideas in order to arrive at a report that is balanced and nuanced and which, we hope, reflects the different needs of constituents in developed and developing countries.

One of the issues that our Committee struggled with was the concept of flexibility in workforce arrangements. On the one hand, women need flexibility to balance their family and care-giving responsibilities with their jobs, particularly when one uses

the ILO's "life-cycle" view. On the other hand, there is a marked growth in contingent work arrangements that may result in fewer workers having the protections of a full-time, permanent job. The situation varies widely from country to country.

Much has been said at this Conference about looking at the future workplace and the challenges it poses. By way of example, I would like to provide some information about trends in employment in the United States and their implications for gender equality in my country.

First, there is tremendous mobility in employment in the United States. According to our Department of Labor, the average worker had held 10.8 jobs by age 42 and 23 per cent of workers over the age of 16 have held their jobs for less than 12 months.

More and more of the United States workforce is contingent, and the trend is expected to continue and accelerate as a result of the current economic crisis. Before this crisis, a study by the MIT Sloan School of Management predicted that new companies would form around projects, using networks of contingent workers, brought together to work while the project lasted. They would be "virtual" companies. The human needs for social and business networking, training and reputation-building are more likely to be filled by associations.

There is strong evidence that this is already starting. In my home state of California, a survey of companies employing more than 1,000 people showed that 73 per cent anticipated increasing their workforce of contingent workers by 25 per cent or more. Interestingly, data from our Department of Labor show that more than 80 per cent of independent contractors prefer that relationship to regular employment.

As the United States economy has increasingly become dominated by the service sector, the ranks of contingent professional workers are now growing faster than the ranks of office, clerical or industrial workers. More than one half of all money spent on temporary workers is for professionals.

What are the implications for gender equality posed by these trends? There will be discussions. Debates are already under way in the United States about whether and how to extend health care insurance to those currently not covered. This is on President Obama's agenda. We can also expect debates about extending leave laws to provide protections to contingent workers. There will be debates about whether and how to provide paid leave. Our laws prohibiting discrimination already apply to contingent workers, but there will be changes in the way these laws are enforced in the future. Some states have already adopted laws prohibiting sexual harassment of contingent workers. As these debates proceed, we hope that the solutions found will be informed by the needs of employers of all sizes, especially small and medium-sized employers, as these employers are the primary engines that create new jobs in the United States.

One notable fact about the current crisis in the United States: in this recession, men have experienced about 80 per cent of the job losses, because the construction and manufacturing sectors have been so hard hit. Ironically, this recession has made the workplace in the United States slightly more gender equal in terms of numbers of workers.

The United States' experience is different from that of other countries. Before the crisis, 49 per cent of the United States workforce were women. If one

includes farm workers and informal workers, the percentage of women is approximately 47 per cent.

In other parts of the world, the debate is not about the second-generation issues such as health-care benefits and leave laws, but about creating conditions for women to participate in the formal workplace for the first time.

Yesterday, our new Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, said that the United States was not here to dictate, but to listen. I was very happy to hear that statement. The ILO Conference is an ideal place to listen and to learn.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr MACHADO GOMES (Worker, Portugal)*

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I am grateful to the President for giving me the floor on behalf of the Portuguese workers. The work of our Committee has shown that gender equality is accepted globally as a necessity for both men and women. The conclusions particularly take account of the fact that measures to reconcile work and family are relevant to both women and men. A variety of measures, such as guaranteed paternal and parental leave, will enable working fathers to be more involved in sharing family responsibilities. This applies to the care of children and dependants. There is evidence that the more men enjoy parental leave, the more women can go out to work. The birth rate also seems to increase as a result and extended working hours for men can be done away with.

In some communities, today's fathers enjoy paternity leave and have a greater share in family duties, which demonstrates a gradual change in attitude and discarding of gender stereotypes. This is important, since shared parental responsibilities are essential for surmounting these barriers of stereotype. A readjustment of gender divisions in relation to family duties in order to have a more equitable distribution of labour is beneficial to both sexes.

Innovatory legislation and proactive policies as well as increased awareness of paternity as a valuable social asset can drive that change forward.

The conclusions call on governments to develop suitable policies jointly with the social partners to enable a better balance between work and family duties for women and men so as to ensure that family responsibilities are shared more equally. This would include parental and paternal leave, with incentives for men to take advantage of such leave since it seems that they frequently fail to do so, even where it is available. Creating equal opportunities and combating all forms of discrimination must be a duty for all men and women workers.

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*Mr ERIKSSON (Government, Sweden)*

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I would like to make a brief intervention in relation to the document before us on behalf of the Governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Supporting the idea of introducing the subject 25 years ago, we are highly satisfied that gender equality has, at last, been discussed by the Conference, and with such good results.

Having said that, I wish to emphasize that we are aware of the fact that most women today carry out and have the responsibility of unpaid care work. This work is of vital importance to the society.

However, the main objective of the ILO's work on gender is to strengthen women's position in the labour market and in paid work. This overarching

idea is clearly expressed in the conclusions, which we strongly support.

According to paragraph 52(d) of the conclusions, the ILO should compile sex-aggregated data on, inter alia, the value attributed to unpaid care work. We are somewhat concerned with the final formulation of this particular assignment to the ILO.

In our view, the data collected by the ILO should reflect the main objective of its work on gender; that is to promote women's labour market participation and decent work for women.

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Mr MACKAY (*Employer, New Zealand*)

Issues of gender equality are many and varied. This poses difficulties in identifying, at the national level, those issues, the resolution of which will most significantly redress any imbalances.

Gender equality is an integral part of a just and prosperous society. Continuous progress towards it is therefore essential. However, it is just as important to achieve it in a manner that does not drain the capacity of a nation to manage the changes needed. Nations must therefore identify the course that will best deliver them to the goal of gender equality. They must also prioritize the steps they will take.

The Committee on Gender Equality discussions heard that: there are more women than men in the lowest paid and least formalized jobs; there are more women than men in the unpaid workforce; there are less women than men in the highest paid jobs in the formal economy; and there are roughly equal numbers of women and men available to work.

When taken together, these facts present three key challenges. One, decreasing the size of the informal sector, thereby increasing the number of women in the formal sector at a proportionately higher rate than men. Two, increasing the participation of women in the higher paid and more skilled end of the formal economy. And three, increasing the number of women in the workforce overall.

In dealing with these challenges, it is important to prioritize them effectively. For instance, countries with large informal economies would make more significant gains in gender equality through initial focus on decreasing the size of the informal economy. Countries with relatively insignificant informal economies may gain more by focusing on increasing participation in the high-end aspects of the formal economy.

All countries may benefit from a focus on growing the workforce on the back of increased productivity, thus increasing demand for skills and driving higher wages and better working conditions. Lifting the participation rate of women in the high end of the formal economy requires long-term investment in education and training to tertiary level and beyond. Clearly, this also requires guaranteed rights of access to such things, and freedom to exercise those rights.

Guaranteed rights and the freedom to use them raises another issue: that of beliefs and traditional values. Several faiths hold views on the proper roles of men and women, roles that are not always aligned to the international, mainly western, view of gender equality. Some countries, particularly non-secular countries, practise the dictates of their holy writings in the course of their daily lives. In a few countries, the holy writings are the law. Thus, considerable care must also be taken to evaluate progress in gender equality not just against the context

of international thinking on gender equality, but also through the lens of faith. Only when all these factors are taken into account will it be possible to develop a truly holistic view of gender equality.

The report of the Committee on Gender Equality is an important step towards that end and I commend it to you.

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Mr ZRNO (*Government, Czech Republic*)

The report of the Committee on Gender Equality reflects a week of hard work by the Committee, and its content is a compromise largely supported by all, into which not all amendments could be incorporated.

The time period allocated to the discussion was quite short, which sometimes made it difficult to consider all the amendments properly. With regard to some questions, the position of the Czech Republic differs from what is expressed in the report. We would like, at this stage, for the record, to present the position of the Czech Government on some of these subjects.

During the Czech Republic's Presidency of the European Union, we prioritized the recognition of the unpaid work done by men and women in the home and in caring for children and elderly persons. They are contributing to social development and, accordingly, should receive respect from the State and from society.

We also stress that the principle of the autonomy of the family has to be recognized in a gender equality policy. The Czech Republic promotes the freedom and autonomy of families to decide on the distribution of duties among their members.

With regard to childcare, the Czech Republic supports parents' freedom to decide on the best form of care for their children. Nevertheless, children's well-being and children's interests have to be taken into account.

Because of its negative experience with the consequences of collective childcare services in the past, the Czech Republic supports individual childcare. Parents in the Czech Republic can obtain social benefits for two to four years after the birth of a child that are equivalent to the minimum wage. Therefore, childcare at home is recognized as an alternative to paid employment.

The priorities of the Czech Republic as part of the European Council contain all these principles: social recognition of unpaid childcare, the autonomy of the family, and respect for children's well-being.

We believe that these principles should be part of a solid gender equality policy.

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Ms VARCHALAMA (*Worker, Greece*)

On behalf of the Greek General Confederation of Labour, thank you for giving me the floor.

Social security is an essential and powerful tool to alleviate poverty and inequality, yet not only are vast numbers of women and men outside the coverage of such schemes and forms of protection, but women are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. Public pension schemes need to be made financially sustainable, so as not only to preserve positive measures that are in favour of maternity protection and the multiple role of working women, but also to remove the systemic unequal treatment of women, which leaves many women, in the face of multiple discrimination, in poverty.

Public and sustainable national models of universal social security that provide access to key ser-

vices such as quality health care, unemployment benefits, maternity protection, child care and elderly care facilities, and a basic pension are also key to fostering transitions to the formal economy. Paternity and parental benefits must also be equally promoted.

Given the serious impact of the recent economic and financial crisis on decent and stable work, the conclusions stress that governments should take effective steps to extend the coverage of social security and social protection to all. In this endeavour, the Committee on Gender Equality is asking the ILO: to develop policy options to help constituents upgrade social security systems so that they are inclusive and take into account the needs of workers with family responsibilities, migrant workers and children, and offer policy options to help formalize the informal economy; to develop and disseminate tools and undertake research to prevent and eliminate sexual or other harassment of women and men and violence against women at work; to strive to improve the understanding of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value and its application in practice, among other means, through technical assistance in applying objective job evaluation methods free from gender bias; to compile and disseminate good practices on parental leave, paternity and maternity leave and benefits, and provide technical support to governments to develop effective laws and policies; to develop work-related policy options for governments in response to HIV/AIDS that address the different impact that the epidemic has on women and men; to promote gender-sensitive occupational safety and health policies, cultures and systems; and last, but not least, to insist on ways to encourage the effective recourse of victims of violations of labour and social security rights to courts and other national authorities.

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*Original German: Mr TOMEK (Employer, Austria)*

It is a pleasure for me to speak on the adoption of the report of the Committee on Gender Equality. We had very interesting discussions over the past week and I am very happy with the results we obtained.

We reached a consensus on very significant points, and there was a real spirit of common purpose. And this cooperation was extremely important in the light of the subject. Women account for more than half of the world population and their contribution to the labour market is invaluable. We, as employers, understand the importance of equal conditions for men and women; and we also understand the challenges ahead in achieving true gender equality – which will provide opportunities for economic growth and the world as a whole.

Notwithstanding the challenges ahead, we must recognize that over the last decade significant achievements have been made and today, more than ever before, women play an essential role in the labour market. Of course, there is always room for improvements, but we should not forget what we have already achieved.

The conclusions we drafted during the discussions are a very important contribution to promoting gender equality, and I am sure that they will be adapted to different national circumstances and levels of development in individual countries.

At all stages of the discussion, we indicated the importance of flexible frameworks that would be

applicable to varying conditions. We wanted to ensure an outcome that would be acceptable to all of the social partners, and we dealt effectively with the views of the constituents, thereby reaching a fruitful conclusion.

I am very happy with the result and look forward to working with our colleagues in the Office, as well as the Governments and Workers; I am particularly happy and surprised that we achieved such a significant result in such a short period of time. I do believe that it could serve as an example for future Conferences.

We focused on the most significant points and it really was an excellent example of social dialogue. There was mutual understanding between Barbara Byers and María Fernanda Garza, and deliberations were conducted under the skilful leadership of our Chairperson, Mr Arthur. I would like to thank them all.

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*Mr WANGARA (Worker, Kenya)*

The aim of the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization is to eliminate sex discrimination in work and to promote gender equality.

Progress has been made over the past decades and international and regional policy statements have strongly endorsed this. However, in order to ensure policy coherence at the international level and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular MDG3 on equality, governments must make budgetary allocation on financing for development, and the ILO should examine and consider all international economic and financial policies in the light of gender equality.

Macroeconomic policies and national development frameworks, such as poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), need to be designed using a gender lens to ensure their content does not lead to adverse effects on women as compared to men. They should take into account the structural inequalities facing women, including gender occupational segregation and unequal power relations in the labour market.

Social dialogue and tripartism are essential policy tools to advance gender equality in the world of work at international, regional, national, community and enterprise levels. When governments, employers' and workers' organizations engage in dialogue and consensus building, real progress can be achieved in designing and implementing non-discrimination legislation and gender equality policies and measures.

The conclusions address the need for the ILO to build international partnerships to promote gender equality through: the promotion of policy coherence on issues of decent work and gender equality at the international level, notably within the UN system and with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the G8 and the G20; the strengthening of partnerships in areas of mutual interest with regional groups and institutions such as the European Union and the African Union, so as to share existing knowledge on gender equality within the world of work; promoting the benefits of social dialogue and the involvement of the social partners throughout the UN system.

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*Ms AL-SULAIMAN (Employer, Saudi Arabia)*

One should never underestimate the value of gatherings such as the ones I attended here, which

seek to support and encourage the better understanding of one another.

As we all know only too well, there is always more that we can do to bridge the gap. This can only be achieved when we can promote new ways of working together across cultures and geographical differences. We live in a time that is fraught with politics, filled with misunderstanding, miscommunication and misrepresentation.

In such extraordinary circumstances, it is all too easy for the negative outcome of the increasingly globalized world in which we live to overshadow and diminish the tremendous potential that exists around us. It is for this reason that organizations such as the ILO are crucial.

The ILO's work is rooted in a belief that change is possible and together we can build a vision for the future. This was obvious during my participation with the Committee on Gender Equality. These gatherings strengthen our resolve and enrich our efforts by giving us the chance to recount our achievements, share our frustrations and strategize together the way ahead. One of the strengths of the Committee was how discussions included countries at different stages of achieving gender equality and facing different challenges. Exchanging experiences embarked us on a process of highlighting and clarifying the consistency and speed of progress in our own countries in comparison to others.

However, the levels of such differences make it sometimes difficult for multiple voices to be heard. Some necessary decisions to a few tend to be overlooked and considered unnecessary or hindering to others, such as the subject of quotas and the importance of cultures.

Redefining such a process to be more inclusive and representative of differences might be even more effective. Yes, there are many challenges, but equally it is a time of tremendous opportunities and possibilities.

As an example, in Saudi Arabia, this reform process is under way and the continuous participation at the ILO has a positive impact.

In terms of achievement, many of the regulations hindering women's participation have been identified, nullified, or altered by the State to cater to changing realities. Nonetheless, changes are often resisted and feared by society, and we should never underestimate the challenges.

We have entered into numerous discussions, debates and social dialogue on the role of women, with both men and women. Much of these discussions focus on the extent to which the role of women in our society is influenced by the fear of loss of values and tradition, rather than religion itself. Attitudes towards women's participation and integration into the development process have been ambivalent, while women and gender issues have proved to be controversial and contentious.

As a result of numerous social dialogues, a process of consensus building has begun and we have started to develop our paradigm and standards for women's role in society, bearing in mind Saudi Arabia's possible ratification of international Conventions and universally accepted human rights.

This also reflects our understanding of equality between the sexes, where equity and justice prevail and the often different but complementary roles of women and men.

Our continuous participation in the ILO and my personal participation in the Gender Equality Com-

mittee marks our commitment to achieve the ILO's strategic objectives. We must continue to hope.

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*Original Spanish: Ms SOTO FUENTES (Worker, Chile)*

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The Committee, and also the conclusions, have dealt with cases of exploitation in export processing zones in many developing countries and in Latin America, where young working women have their right to freedom of association and organization restricted or denied and where they are often also sexually harassed.

There is a concern that the lack of respect for labour standards in these export processing zones leads to unacceptable working conditions. In the conclusions, it is emphasized that freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and to fundamental labour standards should be applied in all export processing zones and should be used to guarantee respect for the rights of workers, including gender equality.

With a view to addressing these issues raised in the conclusions, specific areas are included so that the ILO can address them. The ILO should concentrate on providing decent work for women in these export processing zones, particularly by promoting and monitoring freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and fundamental labour standards, with a view to improving the salaries of these women and the conditions in which they are working, in consultation with the ILO's constituents and working together with governments and the social partners to guarantee the application of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and other fundamental labour standards in these export processing zones.

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The PRESIDENT

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That concludes our list of speakers. I propose that we now move to the approval of the report of the Committee, which is contained in paragraphs 1 to 476. If there are no objections, may I take it that the report is approved?

*(The report – paragraphs 1 to 476 – is approved.)*

**CONCLUSIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY AT THE  
HEART OF DECENT WORK: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

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We shall now move on to the adoption of the conclusions on gender equality at the heart of decent work, which are attached to the report. I propose that we proceed section by section.

*(The conclusions – paragraphs 1 to 58 – are adopted seriatim.)*

If there are no objections, may I take it that the conclusions, as a whole, are adopted?

*(The conclusions, as a whole, are adopted.)*

**RESOLUTION ON GENDER EQUALITY AT THE  
HEART OF DECENT WORK: ADOPTION**

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The PRESIDENT

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Our final task regarding the work of this Committee is to adopt the resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work. If there are no objections, may I take it that the resolution is adopted?

*(The resolution is adopted.)*

That concludes our consideration of the report of the Committee on Gender Equality.

It only remains to me to congratulate the Officers and members of the Committee on the result of their deliberations. They are obliged to conclude often complex negotiations in a short timeframe, and they deserve the gratitude of the Conference for having achieved so strong a result in such an efficient manner. I should also like to thank the Secretariat, who put in exceptionally long hours to complete the report and conclusions on time. Many, many thanks and congratulations to all concerned.

*(Mr Palma Caicedo takes the Chair.)*

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

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The PRESIDENT

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

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Mr GUTERRES (*Vice-Prime Minister, Timor-Leste*)

First of all, I would like to congratulate the ILO constituents and its member States on the Organization's 90th anniversary. This occasion is particularly significant to us because it is the first time since 2005 that Timor-Leste has sent a fully tripartite delegation to the Conference. It is a great pleasure to announce that yesterday Timor-Leste hand-delivered its first ratification of four ILO fundamental Conventions, on forced labour, on freedom of association, on the right to collective bargaining and on the worst forms of child labour.

These ratifications are the result of the hard work of the Government, national Parliament, the Timor-Leste Union of Confederations and Forum of Employers and the Chamber of Commerce, with the support of the ILO office in Jakarta and in Timor-Leste. It is in accordance with tripartite recommendations made in December 2007.

On 1 May 2002, while Timor-Leste was still under United Nations administration, the first steps were taken in adopting the country's first labour code. These regulations adopted are the fruit not just of one opinion but of tripartite discussion and cooperation which, with the support of the ILO, have led to the adoption of a code containing core international labour standards. The adoption of the code was a historic moment for Timor-Leste, sowing as it did the seeds of labour market governance and of the application of fair labour standards to all workers.

Currently, the draft of the new labour code is being circulated among all ministries and secretaries of State, and it will be soon presented to our social partners in a national tripartite meeting prior to its submission to the Council of Ministers and the national Parliament.

This process has been financed by the Timorese Government through the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment and has received the support from the ILO office in Jakarta and many inputs from our social partners.

The constitutional Government of Timor-Leste has taken seriously the need to improve the labour market governance, as set out in the Decent Work Country Programme for 2008–15. Through the ratification of the ILO Conventions, we hope to in-

crease the capacity of workers and employers to participate effectively in the development of social and labour policy.

These Conventions have been part of the commitment of the Government to have its programme approved by the national Parliament. Through the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment, a five-year work plan has been developed to complete ratification of all ILO fundamental and priority Conventions by 2013.

The implementation of ILO Conventions is of course a challenge to our country. Therefore, we shall be counting on technical cooperation from the ILO and from its member States. This morning I discussed with the heads of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency and of IPEC the implementation of triangular cooperation in the area of child labour for the implementation of Convention No. 182.

Our country looks forward to receiving all forms of technical cooperation, including the expertise of ILO member States and all international agencies, in order to support the development of our labour law system.

In this process of development and adoption of new regulations by the Government, and strongly supported by the social partners, the gender issue is very important to us. A national employment strategy has been developed by the Government through the Secretary of State for Equal Promotion, who made a major contribution on gender issues.

Under the legislation on vocational training and employment approved by the Council of Ministers, a Labour Force Institute and Vocational Training and Employment Fund will be set up to ensure that gender equality is a mandatory feature of the decision-making bodies to be established in implementation of the State's programmes.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Conference to adopt the recommendation on HIV/AIDS, which Timor-Leste strongly supports. The Government of Timor-Leste's Ministry of Health plans to conduct research on HIV/AIDS in order to avoid the spread of the disease and to guarantee free treatment without discrimination for those living with AIDS.

Since gaining our independence in 2002, we have worked hard to establish the foundation of our State institutions so as to enable our country and people to develop economically, to live in peace, freedom and democracy, to move towards sustainable development and to build a nation free of poverty.

So far, the Government, the United Nations, the international agencies, civil society and friendly nations have provided support to both improve our quality of life and to satisfy the basic need to establish a new system of social justice which upholds the dignity of the Timorese people through the creation of employment, fair economic regeneration and effective social protection.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your kind attention and also to the member States and international organizations for their continued support and cooperation.

The Government of Timor-Leste and the leadership of Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão will continue to work hard to deliver to our people and our country the development that we need.

We will continue to work with our tripartite partners to implement the decent work principles and we will continue to work hard to bring social justice to all. We are confident that we all will succeed.

We have been holding very rich discussions on the global jobs crisis and exploring ways out of it. We are carrying out extremely legitimate and timely work at the International Labour Conference. The shorter the jobs crisis is, the better the prospects will be in terms of people's livelihoods and the destiny of millions of people across the globe and the more we will be able to contain poverty.

Every country has been affected by the jobs crisis in one way or another. I believe, however, that it is agreed that developing countries have been hit the hardest by the crisis and are suffering most from its negative consequences.

In developing countries, which already had job deficits, particularly among first-time jobseekers, the situation has been further aggravated by job losses, long-term unemployment and under employment among workers due to the current crisis. The economic and financial crisis is having a severe impact on household enterprises and the self-employed too. Falling demand for their products and services has resulted in a sharp contraction of their outputs and revenues, and even closures in some cases. It has had serious implications on less developed countries with a sizeable informal sector, both economically and socially.

It is indeed proven that no country in the world can cope with the jobs crisis on its own, even though they are investing all their efforts to that end, as we live in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world. Take the example of my country. Mining and animal husbandry are the two major sectors in the Mongolian economy, while our main export products are gold, copper, hides, wool and cashmere. Our economy has been severely affected by the rapid and synchronized falls in gold and copper prices on the world market and in demand for livestock raw material products from neighbouring countries. The same may be happening in other countries of a similar nature.

For that reason, close cooperation at regional and subregional levels, as well as among neighbouring countries in a situation of economic interdependence, is crucial to overcome the jobs crisis with minimal suffering. In other words, we need concerted and wise policies aimed at economic recovery, stimulating aggregate demand and ensuring sustainability of banks and financial institutions. To that end, coherence and consistency among international organizations dealing with financial, economic, industrial, trading, banking and labour issues, both at policy and practical levels, is required more than ever. Responsible decisions by leading organizations, dealing with economic, industrial, banking and financial issues, will have a significant effect on achieving sustainable development.

I welcome and support key points made by the Director-General in his Report regarding how member States should deal with jobs deficits. I see it as the right direction for us to follow in the national context. However, I would like to stress the importance of our cooperation and collaboration in implementing these programmes and measures. To that end, regional and national training workshops and other capacity-building measures aimed at developing effective job creation and employment promotion strategies should be expanded with special priority to those countries in urgent need of such assistance. Such needs should be appropriately

addressed in approving programme and budget proposals. From crisis to crisis we have learned that it is crucial to develop and strengthen social security systems including health and unemployment insurance to safeguard workers, not only in times of crisis, but also during the non-crisis period. In this regard, the ILO should pay more attention to developing guidelines, recommendations and manuals on technical and financial management aspects of such social security programmes and should continue to provide technical assistance to member States.

Another group of workers who are being affected by the jobs crisis is migrant workers. Migrant workers, especially irregular migrants, were the first to lose their jobs and suffer. Unless a receiving country implements positive measures, it is likely to cause daunting conflicts and social consequences among these workers and in society at large. I therefore appeal to governments of labour force receiving countries to implement special measures to help such migrant workers in this difficult period, as beneficiaries of their skills and knowledge to build up wealth prior to the crisis.

Mongolia has progressively moved ahead in many aspects of the world of work through its 40 years of constructive cooperation with the ILO. On its 90th anniversary I am pleased to proudly and publicly underscore the effectiveness of our cooperation with the ILO.

In conclusion, I wish every success to the International Labour Conference in its work.

*Original Lao: Mr LOLONSY (Worker, Lao People's Democratic Republic)*

The Director-General's Global Report gave us a clear and comprehensive view of his successful efforts and devotion to his position and to the International Labour Organization.

Last year, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions worked hard to protect the rights of workers by promoting and implementing several activities related to Lao trade union law, in compliance with international labour conventions and labour law.

We have concentrated on disseminating labour law, Lao trade union law and international labour Conventions. We have transferred their substance and spirit to projects on safety and health at work, child labour, HIV/AIDS protection among workers in the workplace, and by monitoring the performances of such projects throughout the country. In addition, we set up a trade union development institute, a labour skills training centre aiming to enable Lao trade union officials, and succeeded in drafting a Prime Minister's decree on minimum wage in accordance with improved living conditions.

To respond to the global financial crisis, which has impacted Lao workers, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions has cooperated with the Government, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other related sectors to organize consultative meetings to address any negative impact on workers. Throughout such activities, we have protected workers and alleviated adverse consequences on them by attempting to improve their skills to allow them to withstand the financial crisis by finding more and better job opportunities.

At all times, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions has been mindful and concerned for the well-being of workers. In that regard, we have set up a plan, in compliance with international labour standards such as Convention Nos 100 and 111, amongst others. In

the future, we will make more effort to study and ratify ILO Conventions in order to better protect the interests of workers.

We are confident that this Conference will bring benefits to us, especially for the protection of the rights of workers. Finally, I wish the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference great success.

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*Original Spanish: Mr MEJÍA HERNÁNDEZ (Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, El Salvador)*

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I am very honoured to be able to speak to you in the name of the new Government, President Mauricio Funes and Vice-President Salvador Sánchez Cerén. I bring you greetings on behalf of the Salvadorian people which are full of hope, unity and solidarity.

Seventeen days ago when we changed Government, El Salvador turned a new page in its history, to write a new chapter of change and to open up prospects of better coexistence, democracy, social integration, broader opportunities, proper appreciation of production and work, stronger institutions and the guarantee of freedom.

We wholeheartedly support the Director-General's Report and are aware that we shall have to face these challenges in the middle of an economic crisis resulting from a combination of internal structural factors and the current international context. We are going to need greater confidence, creativity, energy and dedication in order to transform the crisis into an opportunity for global progress.

We are convinced that in this important international forum for debate and new proposals, we need to focus on the major challenges to employment and on our objectives of generating new sources of decent work, protecting the most vulnerable segments of society and implementing policies that guarantee social justice especially for children, young people and women.

Of course, it is not enough just to concentrate on the social, economic and institutional reconstruction of our country. The new generation of leaders also has to concentrate on the reconstruction of the moral values of our people, in which the main priority is the individual, the elimination of inequality and the revitalization of our most valuable resource, the people of El Salvador.

I realize that this will only be possible if we work together. The battle cannot be won in isolation. The biggest challenge that lies ahead is therefore to unite in solidarity, to join forces and to combine our strengths so as to achieve new goals.

All of us present at this Summit must face the challenge of forging our unity, brotherhood and solidarity in the struggle that lies ahead. This is the only way that we can live up to what is expected of us.

In the name of the martyr bishop, Monsignor Romero, and of the Government of El Salvador, we hereby renew our joint commitment to change.

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*Original Russian: Mr KHARA (Worker, Ukraine)*

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We, the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, agree with the basic content of the Director-General's Report, and with the conclusions, most importantly with the need "to build the foundations of a new globalization based on sustainable, fair and environmentally sound economic growth and social development".

We also welcome the fact that the ILO has taken on the urgent responsibility of overcoming the global economic and social crisis.

At the same time the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine is concerned about the question how fast governments and social partners are going to put the situation right. In the Director-General's Report, it says that as far back as 2004 the ILO had pointed out the increasing imbalances in globalization, calling them immoral and politically dangerous. In the course of the last few years, the ILO has consistently made practical proposals to rectify these imbalances. Last year it proposed a whole package of measures to deal with the consequences of the crisis.

In this connection, there are many questions which we have to answer, including the following.

To what extent have the many initiatives and decisions adopted by the ILO been implemented between November 2004 and April 2009?

What prevents them from being implemented?

And what responsibility is borne by those who have ignored the decisions that we reached together?

I think that, if the proposed measures had been implemented, the world would not be in this unprecedented economic and social situation, which, for many countries, has brought catastrophe.

That is why this Conference must adopt full responsibility for implementing the Global Jobs Pact it has adopted. The price of our potential passivity is too high for the workers and for the whole of humanity.

I have to point out that Ukraine has not been particularly successful in overcoming the crisis. To be frank, we are facing this crisis without a state anti-crisis programme.

As a result, we are experiencing one of the sharpest falls in production – over 30 per cent – and unemployment is at a dangerous level.

As a result of inflation, real wages have fallen by almost 12 per cent. Wage arrears have grown to some 1.4 billion hryvnyas today – equivalent to the average monthly wage of half a million workers. Furthermore, according to our experts, over 20 per cent of workers are earning less than the minimum subsistence level. I would like to take this opportunity to ask the ILO to include Ukraine on the list of beneficiary countries to the InFocus Programme that helps the working poor.

The number of unemployed in the informal sector has increased, where 25 per cent of the employed population already work. Half of all rural workers work without formal employment relationships.

All of this is because those in government and politics still live in a dream world when it comes to the stability of the economy and its prospects – and this despite international economic rating giving signals of a collapse.

In order to spur the authorities into stimulating the domestic economic climate, particularly by increasing employment and social protection, the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine has resorted to a collective labour dispute with the Cabinet of Ministers. The labour arbitration body came down firmly in the trade unions' favour.

Through this labour dispute, we were able to ensure that legislative instruments must be agreed by the trade unions, that our representatives must be included in sittings of the Cabinet of Ministers and so on.

We have agreed to work out joint proposals for drawing up a programme for the development of the domestic market to 2012 and a programme of employment for 2009–11.

The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine has proposed to its partners in social dialogue that joint solutions be found to the most acute questions concerning, first and foremost, economic recovery, reform of the tax system, wages, increasing productivity, optimizing insurance contributions to social insurance funds. Our proposals have been accepted and the Cabinet of Ministers is forming working parties.

On the initiative of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, and in conjunction with the social partners, we have worked out a Plan of Measures for 2009–12 to overcome the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. It has been approved by the National Tripartite Social and Economic Committee and, by common consent, has been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers. The ball is now in the Government's court.

Unfortunately, the many agreements made with the Cabinet of Ministers are being implemented only very slowly. However, we are sure that they will be an important stage on the road to adopting a National Jobs Pact as called for in the Director-General's Report.

Taking into account the fact that this is an anniversary session of the Conference, as well as the scale of the proposals made, we call upon all participants to support the Global Jobs Pact and adopt full responsibility for its implementation. It depends on us now, whether humanity will move into new social and labour relations for the twenty-first century or remain locked in unjust, immoral labour relations, modernized, but full of the spirit of the eighteenth century.

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Mr MAVRIKOS (*representative, World Federation of Trade Unions*)

On behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), we believe that the worries, the thoughts and the anger of the world's working class, due to the widespread attack against its rights and achievements, are fully justified.

The capitalists and the capitalist governments are using the economic crisis to remove the rights of the popular strata. As a solution to the economic and financial crisis, they are encouraging the strengthening of the monopolies and the banks with public, government money. At the same time, they are reducing wages and pensions, increasing unemployment and increasing poverty. They are closing the way for a decent future for the young generations. As basic tools they are using privatizations, reductions in social security, the black economy, undeclared work and the exploitation of migrants.

The rise in racist and neo-fascist parties in the recent elections to the European Parliament is an alarm bell that nobody should ignore. The economic crisis is taking workers in the wrong direction.

One more example is what happened last week in Peru, where the Government killed around 200 natives in the Amazon. This case is typical and shows what many people mean when talking about green development – to kick indigenous farmers off their land and exploitation by monopolies. This is the modern capitalist world: profits for the few, poverty for the people.

The WFTU has undertaken several initiatives for the action of trade unions against the consequences of the economic crisis. We organized an international trade union conference in Portugal, a conference in Nepal, Belarus, Cuba, Nigeria, and so on. Our central proposals are: a drastic reduction in military expenses; an increase in social spending on today's social needs; support for the living standards of workers; an end to privatizations; and support for the self-employed and farmers.

We call upon all workers and all unions throughout the world to fight together for these goals, which are both realistic and necessary.

For years now, the people of Palestine suffer from the attacks and threats of the Government of Israel. And, along with Palestine, Lebanon, the Syrian Golan and the people of Iraq, Sudan and Iran are also the targets of Israel.

We all have good reason to wonder how far this aggression will go. For how many more years will the army of Israel kill children and women? Until when will Israel refuse the establishment of an independent Palestinian State?

The WFTU, since its foundation and until today, is on the side of the Palestinian people, alongside the Arabs; not with words, but with action. And today, we say that peoples can live peacefully. All peoples must live in peace. A basic condition for this is the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Arab territories; to put an end to the occupation.

Dear representatives of the international trade union movement, for the last three years, here, from this podium, we have firmly supported that the ILO must implement, both in its functions and organs, the UN principles; the principle of equality, of proportional representation, democracy and transparency. The lack of these characteristics hurts first of all the ILO itself. The requests we make are fair and realistic.

They need to answer us. After all, in the ILO Governing Body, is it fair for a trade union with 20,000 members to participate as a titular member, while the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, with 200 million members, is not a titular member? Is it realistic that a trade union with 70,000 members is among the titular members, while the WFTU, with 70 million members, is excluded? We wait for a reply, for an effective answer.

We will not stop until a fair and mutually acceptable solution is given. This would be in favour of workers, would be in favour of the international trade union movement and would also be favourable for the ILO.

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*Original French: Ms SIPTEY (Minister of Public Services and Labour, Niger)*

I welcome the setting up of the committee to discuss the question of our response to the world economic crisis.

When the crisis struck in the Western countries and in Asia, we wrongly thought that Africa would be spared, but we followed with great interest the efforts those countries made. The scale of the response even led to fears that cooperation with certain countries would be jeopardized. Consequently, for the developing countries in general and the sub-Saharan countries in particular, the proposals made by the ILO Director-General in his Report deserve approval from the delegates here.

In fact, in these countries where poverty, unemployment and social exclusion are a daily fact of life, there is hardly a summit or forum where the negative social and economic effects of the crisis are not mentioned. So how can we reverse the trend?

In Niger, we have worked out four major strategies to face this crisis.

First, we have begun to update our legal provisions that apply to employment in the form of the regulatory component of the Labour Code. We have incorporated the provisions of a number of fundamental ILO Conventions, especially Convention No. 182, in the Labour Code.

Second, we have also implemented a poverty reduction strategy, the basic document for which the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was revised in 2008. My ministerial department took the opportunity to have the employment and social protection dimension included in the PRSP. In producing this document, the Government of the Republic of Niger is pursuing a number of objectives, namely: vigorous, diversified and sustained growth that will create jobs; fair access to social services; dealing with demographic growth; reducing inequality and strengthening social protection for vulnerable groups; the development of infrastructure; and the promotion of high-quality governance.

The third part of our strategy resulted in the adoption in March 2009 of the National Employment Policy, thereby giving effect to ILO Convention No. 122. This gives concrete expression to Niger's commitment to promote better access to productive employment, which we see as one of the essential components of an economic and social development strategy focused on poverty reduction.

Hence the key areas of activity involving programmes and action projects to consolidate economic and social development and promote decent, productive and well-paid employment are: agriculture and livestock breeding; construction and public works; information and communication technologies; and the modern sector including tourism and crafts.

We are very aware in Niger that decent work means properly paid work in healthy conditions. Accordingly, Conventions Nos 155, 161 and 187 have been ratified and the Occupational Safety and Health Code will be adopted shortly.

The fourth and final part of our strategy is the implementation of the Special Programme of the President of the Republic, creating socio-economic infrastructure in areas such as education, health, agriculture, livestock breeding, vocational training, promotion of employment for young graduates and microfinance for women in rural areas.

These initiatives have created a large number of waged jobs and enabled workers to stay in their own regions, particularly young people, who were previously leaving the countryside in droves.

Niger supports the proposal for the Global Jobs Pact put forward by the ILO Director-General because we believe that this Pact could be a response to the immediate needs of workers and their families, in both the formal and informal sectors. The crisis affects men and women alike, jobseekers, companies and the country as a whole, in one way or another. National responses may therefore prove inadequate to stem the tide and we must think of regional and global solutions.

In Niger, our Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the national employment policy framework paper allow us to take account of the concerns set out in the Director-General's Report.

However, as you know, the implementation of these major programmes calls for substantial investment. Even though the prospects are quite promising for Niger in terms of the development of the mining sector and other major infrastructure projects inaugurated by His Excellency, the President of the Republic, our country will still need support from our partners and investment from national and foreign economic operators to enable us to take these projects forward.

The Global Jobs Pact could therefore serve as a framework for partnership and action at national, regional and global level to promote employment. Niger therefore fully endorses the proposal put forward by the ILO Director-General and commends it for your approval.

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Mr FARRUGIA (*Employer, Malta*)

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It is to be expected that, given the developments of the past year, the Report of the Director-General addresses the crisis and its impact on the various regions and countries worldwide. The Director-General is to be congratulated for the insightful manner in which the Report explains the impact of the crisis and provides a solid backdrop with which the social partners could interact to seek solutions to the global recession. The Report is a passionate call to action, to which the social partners have responded.

This Conference has been an occasion where the process of social dialogue was put to the test. The Report of the Director-General called for a Global Jobs Pact to mobilize the tripartite constituents in all member States to develop a response to the crisis. This was a worthy initiative that ran parallel to the proposal by the International Organisation of Employers to focus the Conference on proposing exit strategies from the economic crisis.

The Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses has been an excellent forum for an exchange of information about different international experiences. The outcome of this Committee – the document *Recovering from the crisis: A Global Jobs Pact* – provides policy guidelines and options to assist countries in exiting the situations brought about by the collapse of the financial markets. This is a fresh approach coming from the International Labour Conference that should be sustained in years to come, as it adds value to the constituents of the ILO, and also enables it to focus more clearly on the issues that fall within its mandate. The debate in this Committee was constructive, and the resulting document is something that can be used as a basis for national strategies that can be easily communicated to policy-makers across the world.

There are signs of green shoots that shed a glimmer of hope on the current bleak situation in many economies. However, the fact that many indicators point towards a time lag between the recovery of the economy and the job market, as has been amply demonstrated during this Conference, highlights the need for policies that are specific in their objective to safeguard existing jobs, and to generate productive employment opportunities to absorb the jobs that have been lost in the shortest time possible. This is clearly no easy task and such policy responses have to be country specific in their design.

Malta has its own distinguishing economic characteristics. It is a small and open economy that is strongly dependent on global aggregate demand for its exports and tourism revenue. Any fiscal intervention to stimulate growth has to be targeted to have any positive impact, since it risks leaking out of the economy through increased imports, resulting in a deteriorating balance of trade.

Trade unions must realize that, rather than spending money on increasing wages to employees holding public sector jobs, which are virtually recession proof, any government stimulus, through increased expenditure, should be channelled towards protecting jobs in the private sector, which are more exposed to the ravages of the global crisis. This can be achieved primarily through strengthening the sustainability of Maltese enterprises, facilitating access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and intensive training and reskilling programmes to enhance job mobility that enable workers to secure alternative employment where necessary. It is fully understood that, even if economies manage to find the path towards economic recovery, the post-recession scenario will be, in some respects, radically different to the one prevailing 12 months ago. All social partners will be facing fresh challenges to adapt to a reshaped economic landscape following the earthquake brought about by this financial turmoil. SMEs will play a crucial role as a starting point in job creation and in rebuilding a healthy private sector. Active labour market policies will also play a pivotal role in matching the skills demands of a recovering economy with supply.

In Malta, the Government has responded to recommendations by employer bodies to go for targeted interventions at enterprise level, rather than for national measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis. In this way, numerous companies in the private sector suffering from reduced export orders are benefiting from financial assistance that has enabled them to retain their existing workforce through job-sharing schemes. Employees are also benefiting, through training schemes purposely designed to upgrade their skills, job retention, and minimal impact on their take-home pay. In spite of these efforts, jobs have still been lost and the economy has experienced negative growth in the past two quarters. This is not due to the financial sector in Malta, which remains stable, but mainly due to a fall in exports and tourist arrivals.

Employers are also urging the Government to speed up the execution of public sector projects, many of which are being financed through funds available from the European Union. These projects will have an immediate impact on aggregate demand, and many infrastructural works will also generate employment in the long term. We also need to tap into the potential of green initiatives to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and to generate green jobs.

In conclusion, I maintain that, if any good is to emerge from a crisis of this magnitude, it lies in the lessons that can be learned to avoid a repetition of the events that led to the financial meltdown, amongst which is the need for better governance of the financial markets in several industrialized countries. The upheavals in labour markets also give scope for the ILO to design ground-based activities which augment the relevance and impact of the institution, and of tripartite social dialogue at the national and global level, in line with the ILO 2008

Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

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*Original French: Mr TRENCHEV (Worker, Bulgaria)*

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I am firmly convinced that the present session of the International Labour Conference will be able to reach tripartite agreement on all the questions under discussion in the spirit of the ideas and principles which go back almost a century and mark the creation of the International Labour Organization and which were developed over the last 90 years.

All these ideas, principles and achievements are nonetheless facing new challenges created by the global financial and economic crisis in the epicentre of which we are today. How can we face the threats to wage earners who are at risk of losing their jobs, the drop in income, the pressure on the rights of workers and employees, the social isolation and the marginalization? This question is directly linked to the concept that the ILO has been defending for the past ten years.

In this respect, we are launching an appeal to all delegates to pool their efforts to prevent the Decent Work Agenda, equity and social protection, the major labour rights and social dialogue, from being called into question.

The term of office of the present Bulgarian Government is coming to an end. We consider that, over the period of ten years of consistent and sustainable growth, the politicians and business have, above all, deliberately sought to obtain maximum profit and benefits purely and simply in their own interests. A clear social polarization of society has developed in Bulgaria, where the absence of a middle class proves that the period of transition has not yet concluded and that European standards are still far away. Bulgarian workers have paid a high price for transition and now they are expected to also pay the price of the present crisis.

Unfortunately, the Government's policy in the field of social dialogue expresses a will to grant an exemption from the rights of trade unions and there are open attempts to devalue their role and the importance of their function as social partners. This is irrefutable proof of the policy of amending labour and social legislation in the interests of big business, hiding under the mask of concern for the flexibility of the labour market and competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy.

This Government, which is reaching the end of its term of office, after declaring in its programme of management that it wished to pursue a socially responsible policy directed towards the development of human and social capital, has practically suspended social dialogue in recent years. It has not respected the agreements under the 2005 Economic and Social Development Pact, has not created possibilities for the implementation of workers' rights, in spite of the existence of a legal framework, and has not responded to the good will of the trade unions to have an effective dialogue in the common interest.

We also have to note that no agreements of any importance have been signed with employers' organizations in the labour field during the last two years. All of this compelled the two trade union confederations of Bulgaria to give up participating in the National Tripartite Cooperation Council in November 2008.

I take responsibility for stating that the Bulgarian Government has to date not given a clear response

to its social partners. Why is it refusing to respond to proposals to ratify important and up-to-date ILO Conventions, such as the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), and the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168)?

Up to now, the Government of Bulgaria, in spite of the recommendations of the Committee of Experts, has not introduced the amendments to the legislation concerning the effective right to strike in the field of public administration, the right of workers in that area to collective bargaining, or minimum activities in the rail transport sector.

I clearly wish to reaffirm, on behalf of Bulgarian workers, from this rostrum, our firm conviction that there can be no future for social dialogue in Bulgaria or probably anywhere else in the world, without identification and mutual recognition between employers and trade unions and without the unconditional respect of the spirit and founding principles of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 of the ILO, which is celebrating its 90th anniversary.

I am hopeful that fruitful work will be carried out at the International Labour Conference, which will never fail, above all at this time of global financial and economic crisis, to strengthen the role of free and decent work and social dialogue as factors and driving forces behind progressive world development.

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Mr YITZHAKY (*Government, Israel*)

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Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, on the outstanding organization of this Conference and especially on having combined this session with discussions at the highest level on the crisis in the labour market.

The State of Israel is also seeking creative ways of coping with the economic crisis in general, and with the employment crisis in particular, while safeguarding the basic principles of the ILO.

The basis for confronting the crisis was established in the agreement leading to the formation of our Government, by means of a round table forum of Government and social partners constituting a governmental advisory body on social and economic affairs and on ways and means of dealing with the economic crisis.

The establishment of this forum is compatible with the cornerstones of the ILO, namely tripartism and social dialogue as a means of promoting decent work, social security and social protection.

In the round table discussions a package deal was agreed upon between the Government and the workers' and employers' organizations, the aim of which was for each of the partners to provide a solid foundation for the enhancement of employment and the prevention of unemployment. A further purpose was to render assistance to enterprises suffering from the economic downturn.

One of the main issues on the Government's agenda is the creation of tools to resolve the crisis. The substantial increase in the occupational training budget should lead to a substantive increase in training-related activity and the integration of unemployed persons into the labour market.

The extension of the Wisconsin Programme throughout the whole country marks an important departure in Israel's social welfare and employment

policy, involving, as it does, the adoption of an economic model based on better labour market placement of the population groups that are recipients of income benefits.

Unemployed workers are encouraged to move to workplaces that are geographically distant. For this, government contributions are available to cover the travelling expenses of unemployed persons who wish to join the labour market far from their place of residence.

Proposals have been put forward to reduce the period of employment for a person to be eligible for unemployment benefits and also to extend the period of entitlement.

Placement in employment workshops and occupational guidance will be made available for the unemployed by the Employment Service, and unpaid leave will be financed by the State as an alternative to dismissal and the payment of unemployment benefits, thereby safeguarding peoples' jobs and social benefits.

The Government of Israel consistently bears in mind the enforcement of labour laws, which is one of the difficult problems encountered in the application of the principles of decent work. Last year, a Bill passed its first reading in the Knesset to intensify the enforcement of labour laws in Israel. The Bill is one of a series of measures being taken on the question of enforcement of labour laws to improve the conditions of employment.

The State of Israel is making a considerable effort to confront the economic crisis and to prevent the collapse of small businesses. The purpose of its intervention in the labour market is to encourage the broadening of employment-related activities both by providing employers with incentives to maintain employment posts and by investing in human capital resources and encouraging the unemployed to take part in professional training with a view to their re-entry into the labour market.

The Government of Israel remains steadfast in its commitment to peace and prosperity in the region.

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Ms PHIRASAYPHITAK (*Employer, Lao People's Democratic Republic*)

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It is a great honour for me to represent the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as being the Lao Employers' representative, at this 98th Session of the International Labour Conference. I fully agree with the presentation of the Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the implementation of ILO Conventions, labour laws, regulations and collaboration with the International Labour Organization by our country.

We have to recognize that the ongoing global financial crisis has caused serious problems for entrepreneurs, consumers, poor people, workers and employers in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. As well as the threat of job cuts, people are faced with the burden of the increasing cost of food. To cope with this issue, the Lao Government, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry have been engaged in tripartite consultations and have secured a 20 per cent increase in the minimum wage across the board. In addition, we are actively implementing a tripartite declaration on HIV/AIDS in the workplace and occupational safety and health activities with local and international organizations

in order to upgrade living conditions, social assistance and job creation.

The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has contributed significantly by operating in accordance with national laws and regulations. In that connection, most Lao enterprises have increased their capacity to employ workers who are benefiting from new technology in production units.

The employers have encouraged and created opportunities for employees to upgrade and refresh their knowledge and skills, are offering fair wages, promoting equality, and ensuring non-discrimination on grounds of gender.

In 2008, the Lao People's Democratic Republic ratified two Conventions: the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Hence, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, on behalf of the Employers' representatives, shall work hand in hand with all social partners to promote and implement those Conventions. In the future, we will cooperate with the Government and the Lao Federation of Trade Unions to study the ILO core Conventions and other priority Conventions.

I would like to thank the International Labour Organization for the funding and technical support it has provided. We hope that in the future, the International Labour Organization, through the Bureau for Employers' Activities, will continue to support the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry in order to enhance its capacity.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr PENA COSTA (Employer, Portugal)*

The Conference agenda this year covers some important issues, and the ILO should be congratulated on its response to the current economic crisis by making it possible to have a wide-ranging discussion on the Global Jobs Pact. The current economic context and its consequences should be at the heart of all our agendas.

The Director-General of the ILO has emphasized in his Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, that this may well be a milestone in the ILO's history. The magnitude of the crisis means that all international bodies must take concerted action – and the ILO must play an irreplaceable role – in developing mechanisms which will serve to kick-start global employment.

The Report lists a set of employment maintenance measures to be taken at the national level, in terms of job security, skills training and support for target populations, such as young people, all of which deserve our support.

Strengthening the capacity of placement services should, as stated in the Report, include public policies that create the right environment for the development of private employment services. In this context, structured temporary employment is perfectly compatible with the concept of decent labour and can, we believe, provide an important contribution to national efforts to tackle unemployment.

There is also, as has been quite rightly pointed out, a need to provide support for business and to ensure access to credit, especially for micro, small and medium enterprises. We are convinced that economic recovery depends to a large extent on restoring trust in the financial system and facilitating access to credit for SMEs, because this is where employment is largely concentrated. This is what

will no doubt provide an essential contribution to the recovery of the global economy and of those who are responsible for creating sustainable employment.

Particular attention also needs to be paid to the impact of the crisis in changing migration flows. The ILO needs the human and financial resources to be able to research and take action in this area.

The ILO is also considering what needs to be done in the post-crisis period. Bearing in mind the Director-General's observation on the 90th anniversary of the ILO that crises always mean change, Portugal's employers are convinced that the post-crisis period will be different from the pre-crisis period.

The differences will be significant, particularly in the balance of power between the "advanced" and the "emerging" economies. In the post-crisis world, economic policies must therefore value increasingly the true wealth of nations which resides in its people, not in speculation, and in its labour, knowledge, learning, ethics and environment. Within this context, the ILO will be able to make its contribution by developing policies that are in harmony with those of other international organizations, in areas such as the liberalization of international trade based on decent work and on undertakings which are ethically and socially responsible.

We are against the temptation to build protectionist barriers, but we also think it is not acceptable that equal treatment should be given to those who systematically engage in unfair competition and who do not respect the most elementary rules of safety at work.

The competitive capacity of the EU, and of Portugal in particular, will to a large extent depend on the ability of organizations, and notably the ILO, to raise the standards of economic activity in a significant number of countries.

In conclusion, I would like mention two matters of particular importance at this Conference. The first is equality of opportunities for men and women in the world of work. Promoting broad access of women to the labour market is crucial for economic growth and for the reduction of poverty at the global level. This is where social dialogue and tripartism can play a crucial role.

The other issue is AIDS in the world of work. The Portuguese employers believe that efforts to tackle the HIV epidemic are more important than ever. Access to detailed guidance and good practices in this area – especially for those States that are most affected – must be improved.

Here, then, is an appropriate framework for action. But it is at national level that specific solutions must be found, and it is the public authorities who bear the primary responsibility in this area.

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*Mr ZARB (Worker, Malta)*

"Globalization does have its dark story, but stronger industrial democracy, freedom of association and collective bargaining rights within our countries will hopefully result in a greater economic and social stability that will enhance global competitiveness and economic performance."

This is a quote from the speech that I delivered at this same Conference last year. The fact that Malta, as many of you know, is a very small island in the Mediterranean Sea, does not mean that we were not and still are not affected by the economic crisis that hit the world recently.

As I stated last year, the process of globalization, mainly through technological advancements, has brought about many advantages, but it has certainly also caused and continues to cause a lot of difficulties, especially for countries that are not economically and politically strong. It is a fact that, in 2009, the poorest countries are becoming poorer and the wealthiest countries are becoming richer. Even the ILO in its statements has declared that the process of globalization is generating an imbalance within and between countries.

Certainly, a lot of analyses have taken place to track the crux of this global economic problem, but surely those families, who at present are in a depressing situation due to the economic crisis, are now very eager to be provided with solutions. They want to achieve once again a decent standard of living and, in order to do this, they first and foremost need a decent job with decent employment conditions.

In Malta, the fact that the local banks were not affected by the financial crisis helped to contain the situation to a certain degree, but this does not mean that the economic crisis that emerged from the financial crisis did not affect our level of unemployment, causing hardship to many people who became unemployed or lost a part-time job.

The General Workers' Union is always on the front line to assist those companies that seek assistance. However, my union is very vigilant with regard to those employers who are not affected by the present recession and who try to take advantage of this situation. Also, in recent months, the General Workers' Union and other major trade unions on the island took action to put pressure on our Government, which, without serious consultation and at a time of high economic instability, increased the water and electricity tariffs. It would have been more logical for the Government to have introduced proactive proposals to bring about prosperity rather than to have created a home-grown crisis.

In addition, the General Workers' Union has conducted a national campaign to raise awareness of irregular migration, which in Malta is a national and high-priority issue. As a union, we did not intervene with regard to the migration policy that was adopted last year by the European Union, particularly with regard to whether burden sharing should be mandatory or not. But we are emphasizing that migrant workers should be paid the same wages and offered the same conditions as their Maltese counterparts. In reality, a lot of abuses are taking place in the underground economy, and this is happening to the detriment of the rights that we, as trade unionists, have strived to achieve with a lot of difficulties through the years. These workers are vulnerable and so they are easily exploited.

The same applies to young workers who very often do not know their rights and are inexperienced, and as a result they readily accept low wages and poor conditions, in fear that if they do not, they will lose their job.

In conclusion, I state that the General Workers' Union is in favour of the Global Jobs Pact put forward by the ILO in the Director-General's Report for this 98th Session to mitigate the adverse effects of the situation. However, this is on the condition that all the stakeholders, mainly the governments and the employers, share the burden with the workers.

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

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As the global economic recession deepens, workers, their families and communities are hurting. Particularly hard hit are those who have lost their jobs. There are now 12 million such workers in the textile, clothing and footwear industries – mainly women and often the family's sole breadwinner – laid off in the past year. At least another 3 million workers in the sector await the same fate.

These workers are paying for the recklessness of greedy bankers, lax labour law enforcement and unregulated globalization. Their pain urgently needs to be turned into gain for the industry and for its current and future workforce.

With up to 15 million unemployed or potentially unemployed, the luxury of drawn out academic and theoretical assessments of the situation is not an option. Workers and their trade unions recognize that urgent remedial action is needed to deal with the immediate crisis, and to chart a course for a sustainable future for the industry and those it employs.

That is why a broad section of shareholders and stakeholders in the industry, brands and buyers, manufacturers and trade unions, governments and international institutions and various civil society bodies, under the umbrella of the MFA (Multi-Fibre Agreement) Forum, have worked at breakneck speed, as the crisis has unfolded, to develop survival and recovery proposals with decent work as their mainstay. Noting that economists foresee domestic consumption, particularly in Asia, as the best route to recovery, the Forum has devised a strategy grounded in decent work and promoting the payment of a living wage as a key tool.

The strategy, under the title "Sustainable Apparel and Footwear Initiative", demands that the sector secures access to some of the US\$3 trillion allocated by the G20 as counter-recession stimuli packages. Corporate and trade unions recognize the urgent need to leverage trade finance, the absence of which is today strangling the industry. The Forum wants workers in the industry to benefit immediately from the rapid social response fund of the World Bank's Vulnerability Financing Facility, with aid going to "good manufacturers", and with preferential access to credit at preferential rates for businesses demonstrably providing decent work.

This is seen as a remarkable opportunity to support raising labour standards in the industry through instruments of financing.

Short-term stabilization efforts need to be accompanied by measures designed to ready the industry for recovery and to boost competitiveness.

Maintaining employment is seen as key here with training and retraining cutting in to stave off redundancies, keeping workforces intact and using downtime to up skill to boost productivity. Funding derived from part of the stimuli packages and government involvement and support will be crucial in this preparation for recovery.

The final element of the strategy is aimed at those where survival isn't possible at the moment, providing for a responsible transition with displaced workers receiving their full legal entitlement to all outstanding wages, pensions and severance, and access to jobs banks and retraining, underpinned by government-provided safety nets. The current crisis has clearly demonstrated the hardship caused by the absence of severance, unemployment and pension

funds in many economies and the need for the urgent establishment of such provision.

Interestingly, the MFA Forum strategy recognizes the fallacy of total reliance on exporting for growth and development. Given that consumption in United States and European markets is likely to take some considerable time to reach pre-recession levels, the strategy places central importance on promoting economic development and stimulating consumer demand primarily in textile-, clothing- and footwear-producing countries. Hence, the emphasis on decent work incorporating the payment of a living wage to all workers in the sector.

Key players in the industry have already begun considering options for modifying their supply chain strategies in order to focus on a broader geographic distribution of consumption, the need for a more highly skilled labour force and innovations in environmental sustainability.

The sustainable apparel and footwear initiative is in reality seeking a revolution in the sector using the recession to fashion a new model for the textile, clothing and footwear industry, based on new global supply chains and new global consumption patterns.

To succeed, this strategy will require urgent input from a range of players, including the industry itself, the ILO, the World Bank, UNDP and governments from north and south.

The ILO should be at the heart of honing this decent-work-centred stabilization and recovery initiative for the textile clothing and footwear sector.

In the first instance trade unions want to see the ILO hosting an early round table brainstorming, bringing together the wide range of players needed to provide the oxygen for the initiative, including representatives from the entire textile, clothing and footwear supply chain, manufacturers and trade unions, brands and retailers, governments from both exporting and importing countries and the financial institutions and the development agencies.

This unprecedented range of interests would then work on how to share the tasks needed in developing the new model industries centred on decent work and paying a living wage to every employee. In coordination they would then roll out the initiative and strategic textile-, clothing- and footwear-producing countries and link closely to the ILO's Better Work and sectoral programmes.

The broad framework outlined has been put together rapidly. Our challenge is now to refine it and put it into operation. The International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation believes the ILO is well placed to play a lead role, in fulfilment of its long-term responsibility for defending and promoting employment and decent work and sustainability.

We welcome the commitment of the ILO in addressing the impact of the current economic crisis on employment and look to it to translate this strong political will into immediate action on the ground in the textile, clothing and footwear industry.

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Mr HOANG NGOC (*Worker, Viet Nam*)

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On behalf of the Vietnamese workers, the trade union organization and its 6.5 million union members, I feel honoured to speak at this important forum. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our congratulations to the Director-General and the International Labour Organization on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of this most important global tripartite organization.

Our Conference is taking place at a time when the financial crisis and global economic slowdown are negatively impacting on the lives and employment of workers across the world. We welcome and highly appreciate the Report of the Director-General, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*. We fully share and agree with the three immediate responsibilities of the ILO identified by this Report, as well with as the proposal for a Global Jobs Pact as a national, regional and global initiative to help workers, families and enterprises to overcome the crisis of globalization.

We value the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration, *The cost of coercion*, presented by the Director-General at this Conference. The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour and the Vietnamese workers are always fighting against any form of forced labour at both the national and international level. We note with satisfaction that the national Constitution, the Labour Code and other legal regulations in Viet Nam have incorporated the basic tenets of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and note the ratification of Convention No. 29, by the Vietnamese Government.

Viet Nam, as other countries, is suffering the negative repercussions of the world economic downturn. As a result, Viet Nam's GDP growth rate grew approximately 6.2 per cent in 2008 and only 3 per cent in the first quarter of 2009, compared to the average GDP growth rate of 7–7.5 per cent recorded over the last decade. More than 100,000 workers lost their jobs last year, and this number will certainly increase in the coming months, due to the ever-growing number of enterprises going bankrupt, reducing production scale and laying off workers.

The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour has made various recommendations to the Government of Viet Nam on how to make full use of the economic stimulus package worth US\$8 billion, accounting for nearly 9 per cent of national GDP, for the prevention of economic slowdown and the promotion of production of enterprises, thus ensuring employment and social security.

We noted with pleasure that those stimulus policies improved initially the production of enterprises, maintained jobs and, at the same time, helped workers in training and retraining programmes to improve their vocational skills, while also stabilizing the labour market and ensuring social security.

The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour considers that representing and protecting the rights and interests of the Vietnamese workers, promoting social dialogue and harmonious, stable and progressive industrial relations, constitute the primary task of the Vietnamese trade unions at the moment – especially in the context of the world economic slowdown. We highly value the technical support and cooperation provided by the International Labour Organization over the past years and hope that we shall receive further support and assistance from the ILO, aimed at the capacity building of the trade union organization and improving skills for social dialogue and collective bargaining, with a view to achieving the sustainable development of enterprises and the national economy.

(*The Conference adjourned at 6.55 p.m.*)

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