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**Book Launch
“There is an Alternative – Economic Policies
And Labour Strategies beyond the Mainstream”**

Welcome to everybody. Good to see such a large turn out for this book launch.

“There is an alternative”, this is the key message of the 2011 Global Labour Column yearbook. It is of no use to lament how bad things are or how unfairly many workers are treated, if we cannot propose policies that can make a difference.

Many people are bitter and angry, that working people and their families who end up paying for the crisis. They are angry that wages, public services, pensions are cut, to bail out those who caused the crisis in the first place. The message coming from the streets in the Arab world, in Europe, in Asia, in North America is the same: *We are tired of being left behind. We want to be taken into account. Enough is enough !!*

But it seems, up to now, the financial industry managed to convince policy makers as well as segments of public opinion that there is no choice: Either governments and ultimately taxpayers foot the bill or the economy and entire societies will collapse.

This political blackmail was only possible because the public and the academic debate are so powerfully dominated by the mainstream. A mainstream that argues: people have to follow the law of the market and not the market the law of the people.

It is this fundamentalist subordination under so-called market logic that needs to be challenged. The ILO has been and remains more critical of neoliberal globalisation than the Washington Institutions. But in part due to its tripartite structure, its progressive political messages often remain too general as getting into the details would raise more controversial issues.

This is one of the reasons why ACTRAV initiated the Global Labour University to bring together trade unions and the academic community for a debate about policies that can make a difference. We want to support and promote research and

debate that is not merely repeating the central message of the ILO, but helping to provide clearer policy ideas.

We are convinced that only the combination of alternative ideas and strong movements can make a difference. Ideas alone might have power of persuasion, but often lack real implementation power. While protest without ideas is rather an outlet for anger than a step towards solutions.

There is no iron law that our societies have to become more unequal, there is no evidence that global free movement of capital yields better results than democratically governed capital markets, there is no proof that low pay means more employment, indeed a downward spiral on wages and working conditions is rather a recipe for deflation and long term stagnation.

Sharan, Richard and Nicolas as contributors to the book are here to present some of the policy ideas, but let me flag one area close to home.

The book includes two articles about domestic workers. It shows the success of trade unions here in Switzerland to achieve a guaranteed minimum wage for domestic workers. The second article discusses the importance of an international labour standard for domestic workers. It shows the mutual reinforcing process of becoming a stronger movement by campaigning internationally for a Labour Standard and the potential of International Labour Standards to support domestic workers to access basic labour rights and organise themselves.

The debate about rights for domestic workers and the success of a Domestic Workers Convention at this year's conference seems to me a living example that there are alternatives and change is possible.

This convention will change the status of millions of workers and help them to have voice, rights and representation in their own countries or their countries of adoption. With the progress made so far, we can say that the battle here at the conference has been won, but the work continues until we have the formal adoption of the instruments next week. Within the Global Labour University an international group of researchers and colleagues from ACTRAV will launch at the ILO the Domestic Workers Research Network to support the unions and the struggle of the domestic workers and undertake comparative research on working conditions, legal rights and organizing of domestic workers.

It is this kind of cooperation between trade union research and the labour movement that we in ACTRAV feel well placed to facilitate and to support and that will help to develop the alternatives we urgently need.

We also want to help to overcome language barriers. Therefore the book will be published in French and Spanish next month and we also start a Russian language version of the Column from next week.

