

Summary of the IALI/ILO workshop on 6 November 2009 in Düsseldorf by Kevin Myers

Normally if I was given this role I would probably try and precis some of the contributions. But we have seen so many in this morning that it is impossible to do that.

So I just want to thank all of the speakers this morning. They have given us a very good description in different ways about examples of the scale of the challenge and examples of the way in which way those challenges are being addressed. A friend of mine is a comedy script writer. In conversations with me he tells me there are only 7 jokes in the world. Every single joke you have heard is a ply and interpretation of seven basic jokes . And listening to the presentations this morning some of the presentations about some of the challenges in some of the most challenging areas you could actually apply some of those to the UK in terms of some of the criticisms, in some of the short comings and things like that. I think there is actually a very common set of principles that we sometimes over elaborate and over complicate. And one of the things we can do working between IALI and ILO is to try to simplify those things but to simplify them with the sense of place to make sure that they are fit for the context of the place in which they are being carried forward. That leads me to one of the other issues that I thought was quite important in relation to what I have heard. We got mutually complimentary responsibilities: IALI and ILO to convert the international conventions to help people to convert them into national legislation and policies and to make them grounded and rooted in practical measures to control and manage risk in the different parts of the world. And that has to have very much a sense of placed depending on the nature of the industry, depending where people are on their journey of the development of their economy. And I do think that's an important role we can do working together to help people do that.

There is a joke in England about how many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb. And the answer is: none - the light bulb will change itself

when it's ready to do so. And I think there's another one of the things I have picked up relation to this.

There is no point either of us wasting our resources unless the people we are trying to help are absolutely committed at the political level to do it.

And that means them putting stuff in to it where we can add value and help work with them in order to help to improve develop there standards, their economies.

And that takes me to the other common thing I have picked up which is it links with the sense of place. If you are trying to improve or change what you are doing is best to do that in collaboration with colleagues that face similar challenges. And that's why I think trying to get an alignment at a regional level rather than gray manning Europe trying to help people how to fix their problems on the other side of the world. But to try and get alliances in different parts of the world where people can share expertise and experience which is catalyzed and stimulated and assisted by the work of the IALI and ILO and that DCWPs and the regional networks that the ILO/IALI has set up seems to be to me mutually complementary in terms of doing that.

Some of the challenges I think we need to face is the challenge of the enormity of the scale of the issue . We say in England (it's not very English metaphor) but we say that you can't swallow elephants whole – you do need to break them up into chunks that are manageable. And once again – I think that DWCPs provide an opportunity to do that. But it's also a challenge to us to ensure we get the compromise between the breadth of our ambition and the depth of it.

It is more important to me that we are mutually successful in actually changing things by going for the depths so that we get sustainable and self-sufficiency rather than spreading out resources too thin.

And that's where - taking me back to the psychiatrist joke: we need to work and concentrate our efforts with those people who are genuinely committed to doing it.

We need to be careful about raising expectations we cannot meet. That's being sort of implied of various stages and I think that's quite important.

What I didn't hear was anything where I thought there is a real difference in terms of what people are trying to do. And we need to try and fix that real substantive difference.

There are differences in terms of means but there is a very very common agenda in terms of ends.

And I therefore think that there are tremendous opportunities for us.

We have been working in collaboration with ILO for a number of years. That working in collaboration seems to be developing and enhancing, partly as result of lots of drivers.

I do think if there were a catch phrase about the conclusion of this workshop it's about working in partnership to maximise opportunities and synergies.

Synergies are often used as a cliché but I think in a real sense of the word if we can maximize the use of our resources and act as a catalyst to do things there are opportunities to reinforce each other objectives in order to help people across the world.

One thing I can't let go the thought that I am taking away from this conference or those thoughts is Marie Luz' comment of seeing labour inspectors as the new renaissance men. And that's with due reference to Michele, Marie Luz, Carmen Bueno and Alison here because it is also renaissance men and women. And in fact of all of the professions that are engaged with labour inspectors seems to be one that has got a very very credible record in terms of equality and having influencer women as well as one or two influencer men.

That's all what I propose by way of summary. I've got to be completed respectful of the interpreters ...