



SEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the International Symposium
on the Labour and Social Aspects
of Global Production Systems:
Issues for Business
(Geneva, 17–19 October 2007)**

1. The International Symposium on the Labour and Social Aspects of Global Production Systems: Issues for Business was held in Geneva from 17–19 October 2007. It was attended by 30 Employer representatives nominated by employers' organizations selected through consultations with the Employers' group of the Governing Body.
2. The agenda of the meeting, as approved by the Governing Body at its 299th Session (June 2007),¹ was the following:
 - Global production systems: trends, prospects and opportunities for business to contribute to economic and social development;
 - Rules of the game: the regulation of global production systems;
 - Social and labour standards in the supply chain; and
 - The role of business associations.
3. In his opening remarks the Director-General noted that globalization had yet to realize its full potential for bringing benefits to everybody, and suggested three ideas to advance the common agenda: green jobs for sustainable development, local economic development and working together to build a fair globalization. Mr Funes de Rioja, Employer Vice-Chairman of the Governing Body, noted that even amongst employers there were divergent views on the benefits of globalization, depending on how it had been experienced. There was a need for an adequate exchange of views in order to understand the real impact of trends in global production systems and respond to concerns expressed.

¹ GB.299/8.

4. The speakers at the Symposium included leading thinkers and practitioners from business, trade unions, academia, NGOs and the development community. The participants considered the experiences and studies they presented and discussed ways in which global production systems can benefit everybody.
5. They pointed to the need to engage small and medium-sized enterprises in the value chain and to improve productivity in order to achieve a strong development effect and reduce poverty. In order for such a policy to work, fundamentals such as good governance, the rule of law, an effective institutional framework and investment in infrastructure, education and public health needed to be in place. There needed to be complementary action by the State and by the private sector in order to achieve the outcomes sought.
6. They noted that core international standards on human and labour rights form an important part of the regulatory framework for global production systems, and play a role in keeping global markets open. Regulatory compliance improved when buyer–supplier relationships were strong and long term, and that higher productivity and better work organization are correlated with better standards performance. They called for a culture of compliance, including better law enforcement, understanding of standards and benchmarking.
7. The report and conclusions of the Symposium, as well as other related documents, can be found on the Bureau for Employers’ Activities link on the ILO web site and will be made available to members of the Committee on request.

Geneva, 22 January 2008.

Submitted for information.