

**Sixth sitting**

Monday, 9 June 2008, 10.10 a.m.

*Presidents: Mr Salamin, Mr. Louh*

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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I declare open the sixth plenary sitting of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference. Before we get into the substance of our work this morning, I would like to give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference for an important announcement.

**ADMISSION OF TUVALU AS A MEMBER OF THE ILO**

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*Original Spanish: The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE*

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In a communication dated 13 May 2008 that was received by the International Labour Office on 27 May 2008, the Government of Tuvalu signified to the Director-General of the ILO their formal acceptance of the obligations under the Constitution of the International Labour Organization in accordance with the provisions of article 1, paragraph 3, of the said Constitution. By virtue of those provisions Tuvalu, as a member of the United Nations, may become a Member of the International Labour Organization by signifying to the Director-General of the International Labour Office its formal acceptance of the obligations under the ILO Constitution. Therefore, it is my pleasure to announce to the International Labour Conference that Tuvalu has become the 182nd Member of the International Labour Organization as of 27 May 2008. I would like to welcome Tuvalu as a Member of our Organization.

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE**

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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We shall now open the general discussion of the important reports up for review by the Conference in this plenary sitting: 2007–08 Report presented by the Chairperson of the Governing Body to the Conference, which was published in *Provisional Record* No. 1, the Director-General's Report entitled *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, the Report of the Director-General: *ILO programme implementation 2006–07*, and finally the Appendix to the Director-General's Report: *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*.

Before I give the floor to the Director-General for him to present his Report, I would like to share with you some thoughts that came to me as I read this important document.

The Report clearly sets out the objectives that the Decent Work Agenda should attain; it stresses the importance of strengthening tripartism and social dialogue as vital instruments for democratic governance and it gives delegates to this Conference an

opportunity to assess achievements in implementing the Agenda and to define or redefine the path to follow in the historical context of today's world and labour relations.

I am convinced that the Decent Work Agenda offers a practical means of striking a fair balance among the political, economic, social and environmental goals of our peoples. We must not forget that people should be at the heart of any conceptual and material effort that we make. There cannot be sustainable development if there are men and women who still are not able to exercise fully their fundamental rights, who do not have access to decent work and adequate social protection and who are unable to make themselves heard through social dialogue, which can be decisive for their own destinies.

The ILO's efforts to achieve these goals are already paying off in some regions. However, the road before us is long. This is why it is of capital importance to strengthen the capabilities of this Organization so as to enhance the potential of its constituent governments, employers and workers.

I would like to thank the Director-General for having identified the main goals and for reminding us that the role of our Organization is a permanent one and will continue as long as we achieve our stated aims.

Finally, regardless of the challenges before us the main vocation of the ILO is to encourage tripartite dialogue as a solid foundation for new labour cultures that can contribute to peace in the labour world and economic and social well-being for all. I believe that this is the main idea that that comes out of the Director-General's Report.

**PRESENTATION OF THE REPORTS OF THE  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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It is now my honour to give the floor to Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference, for him to present his Report.

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*Original Spanish: The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE  
CONFERENCE*

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Minister Salamin, President of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference, Honourable Ministers, leaders of employers' organizations and trade unions, friends from the Geneva international community. Dear friends, from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Americas, the Middle East and Europe, you

have joined forces in this world parliament of labour: 168 countries, 4,000 tripartite delegates.

You have come convinced that trusting dialogue among equal partners can lead to more efficient enterprises, greater fairness for workers, dignified workplaces and effective government policies.

We have seen it again over the past two weeks. It is precisely that spirit which guides me as we look ahead. Many of you have asked me how I see the future, where should we be going and how do we get there? Let me answer right away – together! We are strong when we have unity of purpose and the determination to challenge ourselves to leap forward. We find creative solutions to legitimate differences. We open new roads with constructive, positive, cohesive tripartism, no social challenge is insurmountable. What does this mean for the Office and for me? It means that we must continually listen to you to guide our way forward. Listen, listen and then listen again. Having listened and learned, we must question and adapt ourselves and then innovate and sharpen our actions better to serve your needs in your regions, in Turin and here in Geneva.

I count on the commitment, confidence and capacity of the ILO staff to move ahead as a team: with enhanced governance, reinforced at this Conference; with a strong knowledge base, constantly renewed and linked to your own knowledge networks; with practical policies and tools adapted to your diverse needs; with creativity, providing innovative and workable solutions; with sound, timely and efficient delivery of services through decent work Country Programmes (DWCPs); with continuous improvement in management efficiency and with an increasingly integrated approach to strategic objectives. All of this guided by the values that bind us together. Labour is not a commodity. Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. Freedom of association is the foundation of progress. To boil it down to one word – dignity. The aspiration of people everywhere for the dignity of work and the dignity at work, the solid basis for social justice and peace.

Dear friends, we are a unique institution. We are the heirs of that proud inheritance, forged in Versailles, reaffirmed in Philadelphia, awarded in Oslo and reinforced here at this Conference, with a declaration for social justice and a fair globalization adopted by your committee, an institutional commitment to carry forward into the twenty-first century our global brand, the Decent Work Agenda, an agenda that is in great demand, but which is also under tremendous pressure because these are turbulent times. The price of food is battering family budgets and poor workers in particular, and also government finances. This is about employment, investment and production as much as about prices. This is the message your Committee on Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction gave us.

To feed one's family, people need a decent job and a fair income. On Wednesday, we will have a high-level panel discussion on "Tackling the food crisis through investment, production and decent work", with the participation of the Prime Minister of Lesotho, the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and representatives of the Employers and Workers. Also, a year ago, yet one more financial crisis erupted; repeated financial crises are the mark of our times but we know that investment, enterprises and employment need stability, not speculation and greed,

which often divert resources from production and breed volatility.

The real economy, and you all represent the real economy, needs a stable financial market. Restoring confidence and credibility in the financial system to service the real economy is essential, and so is fairness in sharing costs. Yet the biggest danger lies in the threat of rising inflation, economic slow-down, even recession, and unemployment. We have been there, we know what it means and counter measures are urgent; governments must come together to address these risks to working families. However, beyond the short-term, we need to solve the tensions of the crisis that were present before the crisis: a globalization that is generating growth but not enough quality jobs, along with rising informality; a globalization with a steady increase in productivity but not in wages; a globalization with advances in combating extreme poverty but deepening inequality; a globalization that I will call without social justice. We need a new policy balance based on the mutually reinforcing role of the public policy functions of the State, the productive dynamism of the market, the democratic voice of society and the needs and choices of individuals, families and communities.

Many tell us that they find that balance in the Decent Work Agenda and a fair globalization. Today we can say the world is coming our way. There is a growing global consensus for this kind of balanced approach that is so essential to a more peaceful world, but that means that we have to be ready to assume our responsibilities. The ILO has a unique opportunity to play a central role in an emerging system of global governance, combining financial stability, investment for development, fair trade, and decent work, and to which we add you – we add the presence of not only the Governments but also the Employers and Workers. This is the time then to consolidate and innovate, not to reinvent our agenda. Our discussions over the last few Conferences have helped show the way, as we explored together the changing patterns of the world of work two years ago, the link between decent work and sustainable development last year, as well as some strategic challenges ahead this year.

This discussion and the ones we will have here, will, I think, highlight many common ideas that can feed into the formulation of the next decent work Strategic Policy Framework for 2010–15, in which I invite all of you to participate fully. As the tripartite ILO, we also have a unique opportunity to organize our work together. The Strategic Policy Framework will cover six years. It is the moment for all of us to come together and decide what are the axes, what are the priorities, what are the methodologies that we want to use in order to make the ILO play the role it has to play in the emerging global governance? Reflecting on our exchanges and building on what we have achieved together, I want to signal some key areas of responsibility for ILO global policy-making that are within the framework of the four strategic objectives and which, taken together, can make a significant difference in our own work.

First, building a global social floor. Security for people is the foundation of sustainable societies and communities, yet four out of five people in the world lack basic social protection. We have heard much about the sub-prime financial crisis, but let me say that there is also what I would call "sub-prime work", substandard and vulnerable jobs with-

out fundamental rights, without basic security, without the prospects for mobility and dignity. In the face of sickness, disability, child-rearing and old age, they must find their own way. Building on the Millennium Development Goals, the time has come to develop together the notion of a comprehensive social floor to prevent people from falling into destitution, to help them overcome poverty and move up the ladder of opportunity. Of course, we can go step by step, according to each country's needs and priorities. Ultimately, a social floor is the foundation for an inclusive labour market and a solid middle class, and development cooperation can play a major role. I invite you to give this a major push in the future, building on the rich experience of many countries who have already decided to move in that direction.

Second, nurturing sustainable enterprises. Last year, your Conference adopted the landmark resolution concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises. This provides a formidable tool to generate wealth, create jobs and foster a culture of entrepreneurship.

We have seen that too many small enterprises falter along the way, yet we know that that is where employment comes from. We need to assist countries to boost management training for entrepreneurs, skills for workers, access to finance, technologies and markets, as well as basic safety and health provisions, occupation and accident insurance, different forms of job opportunities and women and young people. I think that concentrating on smaller enterprises is one of the best ways to formalize progressively the informal economy, address migration for work and ensure that the voice of small enterprises is better heard in policy-making. On the basis of what we have already done, I believe we can launch a major productivity and decent work initiative for the promotion and development of medium, small and micro-enterprises which would make the ILO the hub of the knowledge and service network which can promote and develop the notion of small enterprises essential to job creation and to social stability. The Committee on Skills has produced immensely valuable conclusions in this regard. At the same time, we must fully applaud the ILO's Green Jobs Initiative which has received strong support from the UN family. Climate change and environmental pressures will involve significant adaptation for enterprises and workers. That is where the transition to a green economy will happen in enterprises. Last month I was invited to Japan by the G8 labour and employment ministers, where they adopted a four-point plan for global sustainability, building on a Decent Work Agenda.

Third, rights at work. This year is the 60th anniversary of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and let us also not forget that employers as well as workers must equally enjoy that freedom. We have to continue the struggle for universal respect for freedom of association and it has to be a tripartite commitment as it is in the Declaration. I must pay tribute to the tens of thousands of trade union activists around the world who daily stand up for their rights and those of their fellow workers when confronted with anti-union attitudes and labour abuses. Sometimes employers' organizations also face difficulties. I am proud of the role the ILO supervisory system plays in protecting rights at work.

We must constantly refine its working methods. I know from hundreds of personal testimonies that those on the front line value the ILO's constant vigilance. Standard setting is the utmost expression of tripartite dialogue charting the way ahead.

*(The speaker continues in English.)*

I find that the way that we have recently developed standards appropriate to each situation is the way forward.

For example, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 was rather detailed because the negotiators felt that that was necessary. In the case of the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), it was promotional because you concluded that what was needed was a promotional approach. I think that this is the realistic way to reinvigorate our normative function and we need to have the courage and the political will to continue exploring its potential for new challenging areas, for example domestic workers.

Over the last ten years we have achieved a 50 per cent increase in ratification of the eight Conventions that underpin the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including those relating to forced labour, child labour, discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining. Universal ratification is within reach. As I have proposed to you in my Report, let us go for it by 2015. This should make us focus even more on the application of standards.

Fourth, strengthening tripartism. This session of the Conference has been exemplary, this session in particular has been an exemplary display of tripartism power, not only in resolving differences but also in crafting a vision of the way forward. We must bring this experience home. There is, of course, no single model for effective tripartism and social dialogue. Every country will find its own formula, and we can all learn from each other. Unions and employers are building new structures for constantly changing memberships and demands, and ministers of labour are modernizing labour market institutions, policies and services. We know that the ultimate test of tripartism is to deliver at home. Capacity building and organization are key, and a key aspect of how we move forward is to ensure that these take hold locally, that we can help you find different avenues for the different difficulties that you have. We have to be able, from the Office, to synthesize our experience to bring to you the most appropriate options to deal with issues at the national level. We have to bring tripartism and social dialogue to the field.

We must act decisively on the four areas in which we have a strong foundation of norms and policies. Why have I chosen to highlight these areas? Because, if we do so, the reach would be enormous. We can help change, literally change, the lives of the unprotected: 80 per cent of the world's population. We can significantly expand employment opportunities for the 3 billion people living in poverty. We can help move to a jobs-intensive and sustainable growth pattern, and we can consolidate respect for rights and dialogue as a productive road to peace. If we do these things, millions of people could be positively affected and we will set in motion institutional processes that could lead us to better growth and better globalization.

These are only some of the daunting challenges ahead. I mentioned already the discussions on the two previous Reports in this regard and I believe that we can meet these challenges with assurance. This is not based on idle hope or wishful thinking, it is rooted in what we have accomplished together over the last years. Together, we have defined the concept of decent work and helped transform an internal agenda into a global goal. We have mobilized a balanced and broad coalition for a fair globalization, which has become a common-sense objective. We have embarked on a new era of partnership with the entire UN family by mainstreaming the Decent Work Agenda in the UN system. We have come a long way in reforming our Organization, by implementing strategic budgeting, results-based management, modern technological support, quality assurance mechanisms, new oversight, accountability and evaluation, and we must, of course, continue. We have put a practical emphasis on expanding real opportunities for women in the world of work, starting within the ILO. I am proud to report that the ILO is helping to lead the way in gender equality at all professional levels within the UN system. I have also asked for the statistics of this Conference, let me report them to you, we have 26 per cent of women combining all delegations, 31 per cent in Governments, 21 per cent in Workers, 18 per cent in Employers. As I said before, on this issue, I think that we can do better. This is not the record to rest on, it is one to build on, and we need to move deeper and faster but, above all, together; and of course we cannot reach our goals alone, we need robust partnerships and alliances for decent work. For example, we are helping to bring tripartism to the entire UN family and to government departments. This is opening new doors for influence and impact in broader policy-making beyond the boundaries of the ILO and, as a result, a decent work for decent life movement is emerging. I think that you have heard me say before that I believe that, together with the women's movement, the environment movement, the human rights movement and other movements that have helped to push ideas and change in society, one day, and it is already happening, a decent work movement will emerge.

Next year will be the 90th anniversary of the ILO. We want to work with you to make sure our 90th year provides a platform, a space and an opportunity to showcase tripartism for practical action, to show an ILO that is relevant to all countries, developed and developing, to all workers, formal and informal, to all enterprises, large and small. I invite you to organize national events at the highest level on social dialogue for decent work and a fair globalization in each of your countries. This will be a unique opportunity to come together and declare through social dialogue that we want to move forward and agree on the solutions that matter most to people: a good job, security and dignity, opportunity to move onwards, a solid future for our children, through enterprise and investment.

Let us not forget solidarity as we look to the future. Let us not forget Nelson Mandela's message last year when he told us with that powerful voice of his that the voice of the ILO pierced the walls of Robben Island and he felt he was not alone. Today it is Aung San Suu Kyi, the plight of the Palestinian people subject to collective banishment, as depicted in my Report, and so many others. This is what we

stand for. We have never forgotten those in peril. It is the ILO values that make us proud.

We must dare to assume the role that history is offering. Let us not drop the ball because we cannot innovate. Let us believe in ourselves and our capacity for renewal and renovation. Let us be proud of what we have achieved and self-assured in what we will achieve. Above all, let us be a family: an ILO with differences, even major differences, but a family and a team dedicated to the purpose that brought all of us here today – dignity at work.

*(The speaker continues in Spanish.)*

Let me finish by saying thank you for the support the Office and I have constantly received from you all these years.

And with enormous humility and respect, I want to thank the many of you who feel I should stay on my task as Director-General of the ILO, and continue what we have done together.

Many have already made it known publicly.

Your trust touches me deeply. I will be honoured to do so if that is your decision.

I will do so with all my energy, commitment and belief in this great tripartite institution I have come to love dearly.

#### **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION**

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*Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT*

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Thank you very much Dr Somavia, for your wise words which provide us with leads for reflecting on this issue and exchanging ideas.

Before I open up the discussion on this matter, I would like to make a statement on behalf of the Officers of the Conference to remind you of the principles that will govern our forthcoming discussions. These principles were defined by the Working Group on the Programme and the Structure of the ILO and they were approved by the Governing Body and communicated to the Conference in 1967. You can read these in the fourth section of the Conference guide.

In accordance with these principles, any delegate attending the International Labour Conference has the obligation to remember that the International Labour Organization has responsibility not only to promote the values of liberty and human dignity enshrined in the Constitution of the ILO and but also to ensure that there is the highest degree of collaboration in pursuit of the ILO's objectives. Therefore, the President of the Conference must ensure that the Conference does not lose sight of those principles.

I would like to remind you that the debates of the International Labour Conference should not overlap with the discussions that take place in the Security Council and in the General Assembly of the United Nations, whose role it is to adopt decisions that are political in nature pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations.

Freedom of expression is a key element of the International Labour Organization. However, in order to exercise this right of freedom of expression in a climate of mutual respect and to ensure that our tasks are successful, we must accept a certain degree of discipline.

It is key therefore, when delegates make their statements, that they keep to a parliamentary language, respect the agreed procedure, limit their

comments to the issue under debate and that they do not raise an issue which is not relevant to the debate.

Any delegate can exercise the right to reply if he or she believes that it is necessary to respond to something that was said against the Government of his or her country.

If such a circumstance should arise before the end of the session, the delegate should approach the podium and inform the Clerk of the Conference that he or she wishes exercise the right to reply. The Clerk of the Conference will convey this request to the President of the sitting and the President of the sitting will agree with the delegation concerned on the time at which the right to reply can be exercised.

The response must refer exclusively to the point under discussion. It must be brief, it should not exceed two minutes, it should be expressed in a parliamentary language that is appropriate for the circumstances and should not give rise to new comments.

I would like to underscore also that, in order to prevent endless debates, the President usually turns down the right to respond to a previous reply.

Please take note of the fact that the maximum length of the statements is limited, according to our rules, to five minutes. All delegations and all ministers attending the Conference would do well to respect, or to have in mind, this five-minute limit when they prepare their statements to ensure that the President does not have to put an end to their statement before they have finished what they planned to say.

As agreed with my fellow Officers of the Conference, I would like to encourage all delegates to respect the aforementioned principles. As far as we are concerned, we are committed to ensuring that these principles are respected.

I take it that the Conference is in agreement with the provisions I have just referred to and that there are no objections.

*(It is so decided.)*

The discussion is now open. I would like to invite the first speakers on the list, the spokesperson for the Employers' group and the spokesperson for the Workers' group, to come to the podium.

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Mr FUNES DE RIOJA (*Employer, Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group*)

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The Director-General's Report to this year's Conference looks to develop the themes arising from last year's Report and explores some of the strategic challenges to the Decent Work Agenda.

There is a lot in the Report and time is short. The Governing Body will have the opportunity for a more in-depth debate at the appropriate moment.

Whilst the recent credit squeeze and impact of the sub-prime mortgage crisis for the United States have caused problems, we must also recognize that those problems have in some instances been diminished and that the way in which the global economy was able to absorb such a shock – including that associated with a sharp rise in the price of oil – without collapsing, shows a robustness that has surprised many economic analysts.

Therefore, it is important that we as an Organization avoid having our policy responses dictated or resources allocated by events which may, over a

very short time frame, be seen as less of a challenge after all.

Certainly, we should monitor such situations and see how their effect may impact on key ILO objectives such as employment.

That applies also to the global food crisis. We agree it is serious. We therefore need to watch it closely and reflect in the Governing Body as to whether or not an ILO response is required.

Turning to another topic in the Report, it is recognized that improvements in ILO governance have been made, beginning modestly with the Conference itself. We welcome the recognition that such reform also needs to address the effectiveness of the Governing Body.

As constituents, the Employers look forward also to making further improvements to the ILO and the International Labour Conference.

The world of work today is more complex than perhaps it has ever been. That reality makes it even more important that we focus our work. Resources are tight. We must fit what we have to do within the framework of our resources.

The capacity issues raised in this Report to the Conference can, in our view, be done now. They are a management responsibility and, if resources are needed to realize them, we need to re-examine our priorities so that those resources can be found.

As the debate on the Report is also to be captured as a contribution to the Strategic Policy Framework process, let me restate that the position of the Employers' group on that has been well developed – notably by the Employer members of the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee (PFAC) of the Governing Body – and has been presented to the Office. We look forward to seeing a policy document in November which is focused in terms of activities, efficient in its delivery to Members, realistic in terms of the use of resources, and one with which the Employers can associate themselves.

Let me now turn briefly to the Employers' vision of the ILO and the future. The question for the ILO today is how to respond by helping governments, workers and employers adapt to rapidly changing global labour markets.

We seek an Organization focused on achieving its goals and capable of adapting to the new realities of the world of work.

In this regard, the policy priorities we identified cover the following key areas: the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; a modern and high-impact labour standards policy with transparent and objective supervisory machinery; programmes and policies targeted at employment generation and employment security, as opposed to job security; policies conducive to the creation of sustainable and competitive enterprises; strengthening labour market institutions by constructing economically appropriate labour legislation, and reforming existing regulations so as to promote labour market flexibility and respond to changing market demands, education and training for employability of workers, and address the issue of informality; and the creation of safe workplaces through the promulgation of occupational safety and health best practices.

To deliver on the above policy priorities, the Office should concentrate its implementation strategies on the following objectives: reorient the focus of the Office from advocacy to technical work and

technical assistance; develop a human resources strategy to recruit and retain staff; ensure transparency and accountability in all activities; reinforce the capacity of the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) to enable them to cover the needs of the employer constituent; and, finally, work closely in collaboration with other international organizations, leveraging each others' comparative strengths in a fashion which results in positive and true complementarity.

Let me say a few words on the situation in the occupied Arab territories. The Director-General's Report yet again paints a bleak picture of collapsing economic activity and social deterioration. This should concern us all.

We add our voices to those calling for peace and ask all actors to redouble their efforts to secure it. Without that, efforts to improve prospects for employers, workers and their families will continue to be frustrated. In a global world this situation is not sustainable or acceptable.

We also call for the respect of the right of employers' and workers' organizations in the territories. As institutions, they will play an important role in any economic and social recovery.

Finally, I would like to stress the disappointment of my group concerning the so-called "procedure" followed when the list of cases to be discussed by the Committee on the Application of Standards is drawn up. Any proposals put forward by the Workers are, in general terms, accepted. However, when a concrete case is presented by the Employers, it seems that Convention No. 87 does not come into play. That is good for some but not for others. This is particularly the case this year in the Committee on the Application of Standards which was unwilling to discuss the violation of freedom of association of which the employers of FEDECAMARAS in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are victims.

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Mr TROTMAN (*Worker, Barbados, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group*)

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Mr President, while I am unaware of any specific incident that might have informed my counterpart's demand for global acceptance of the right to freedom of association for all, I am hopeful that this commitment by the world's Employer spokesperson has been heard, and will be respected and echoed by all governments and employers everywhere, particularly following such a strong statement of support for Convention No. 87.

We consider very relevant the part of the Report concerning policy coherence relating to the follow-up, and to the valuable recommendations of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

We particularly welcome the reference to joint work by the ILO and WTO secretariats to support members by providing up to date knowledge and experience through joint ILO-WTO training research, and other forums, to discuss the impact of proposed trade reforms on the quantity and the quality of employment in all countries that would be affected by such reforms.

Similar approaches to review the employment consequences of the IMF and the World Bank proposals for reform are welcome.

In this regard, the statement in paragraph 118 that there are still some difficulties to be resolved regarding the labour component of the World Bank-

IFC *Doing Business* reports, is a major understatement.

We in the Workers' group reiterate our position that the labour component should be removed from the Report entirely.

We further support the references to the role of the ILO, particularly paragraph 130, concerning the DWCPs and the development of international policy perspectives.

We support the call, particularly in view of the strong support expressed by the international community through ECOSOC and the G8 resolutions and similar initiatives, for increased regular budget resources for the ILO.

We further agree with the call for stronger research capacity to confirm the ILO's position as the pre-eminent service organization delivering information on the world of work. After all, it was me who insisted on this during last year's initial discussion on the action programme to strengthen the ILO's capacity.

The Report is strong in outlining the global economic picture with regards to the financial crisis, lower food availability, the informalization of the economy, and the squeeze on the middle class, but we believe it could have gone into greater detail regarding the question of solutions to these problems.

There is, however, a thread unifying all the elements referred to here. We are speaking of a failure of governments. It is a lack of effective regulation and adequate state intervention that has created the problems we face today. There has been a lack of action by governments, or restrictions, with regard to private equity firms, or government ineffectiveness in defending trade union rights which could lead to fairer income distribution and hence to societies more capable of handling the types of global economic pressures like those which we are now facing.

The answer that should spring loud and clear from this Report should be that there is a case for good regulation of the world economy, requiring an active role for responsible state intervention, as well as renewed emphasis on a sounder system of industrial relations with a strong emphasis on collective bargaining.

The explosion in food prices over the past years, with increases of 57 per cent according to the United Nations, has given a new urgency to address the development agenda. The human cost is reflected in the growth in world hunger, which has now spilled over into food riots in my region in the Caribbean, and in Africa, as well as other parts of the world, including Asia. We require world leaders to improve emergency responses, including action to counter speculation in food markets and expansion of emergency support to the poorest, together with more medium-term action to expand food production. A similar observation has to be made regarding the mindless speculation in oil.

To meet the core Millennium Development Goals, the industrialized countries must honour commitments to increase development assistance. At the same time that the Doha Development Agenda actually seeks to deliver economic and social development to the developing countries, it should be made clear by the industrialized world that it will not put pressure on them to trade off their potential gains in agriculture for sustainable losses, or rather

for unsustainable losses, in the NAMA negotiations with the WTO.

While discussing the informal economy, it is really myopic to propose microcredit as the only ILO action. Paragraph 95 refers to guaranteeing rights in the informal economy. We stress, however, that it should be a question of rights with a view ultimately to formalizing the informal economy. This must be stressed as a fundamental way of addressing the challenges in this area, together with the ILO's follow-up on the employment relationship. What is critical is a strong internal coherence, since the elements for growth and development cannot be separated.

We strongly agree on the importance of universal social action, the path to extension of coverage and social security, occupational safety and health, and conditions of work, including fair wages and other benefits. However, the ILO's Report displays a worryingly low level of attention to the gender gap, which seems to have received only about half a paragraph. The gender dimension of inequality remains to be effectively tackled, and government action is required, as we have noted from the ITUC's report, some 63 countries show that on average women are paid 16 per cent less than their male counterparts.

With regard the current financial crisis, trade unions are demanding a coordinated government response to the crisis, including easing of monetary restrictions, backed by fiscal policy, a call that has been made by the IMF itself. In this regard, we fully agree with the support voiced in the ILO's Report to rebuilding the manufacturing sector and creating a real economy in place of one geared to a financialization, hence supporting an innovative productive economy that generates products and services for the market and jobs for workers. The ILO must call for economic, finance and labour ministers to take coordinated action, together with central banks, to halt the contagion and ensure that measures taken have a specific focus on raising the quality and the number of jobs, as well as on addressing the lack of transparency and effective regulation of global capital markets.

The middle class extolled in the ILO's Report is being hit in many countries by wage stagnation and a lack of purchasing power. The long-term decline of wages as a share of national income, and the growth of inequality wages, have become characteristic features of global growth. This will add to the decent work deficit and must be addressed.

Trade unions have called for equity audits of the economic and social policies of all relevant government departments and international institutions. Furthermore, governments should insist on freedom of association and collective bargaining as the means of encouraging trade unions, so as to bring the much-needed balance in to the employment relationship and to promote fair distribution of wealth and social justice.

We strongly agree with the need to assert the benefits of tripartism and social dialogue, and we very much support the proposal for all constituents to hold high-level tripartite events and debates within their countries on issues of interest to them within the general framework of social dialogue for decent work under a fair globalization.

In concluding my remarks on this Report, I would like to express our concern that international labour standards are not given enough prominence as a

central element in the grand rules of the global economy. Now, more than ever, we believe that the ILO can and should provide guidance through its standards and its supervisory system for the realization of social justice.

We would also like to comment on the other important Report submitted by the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. The Workers' group welcomes the frank analysis contained in this Report. The current situation can only make us more worried than we were before. We need to indicate paths for solutions, and to do so, we would like to emphasize two elements. First, the need to institutionalize a number of job programmes, whether through public sector employment or through specific emergency donor programmes. We have to move beyond the provision of food aid. Secondly – and this is really the key issue – it has to be stressed that things have moved from bad, through worse, to appalling. The situation must not be allowed to continue. We need, therefore, some coordinated action in order to bring about a political agreement. We urge all those who can assist in providing a meaningful solution to do so.

Finally, let us provide aid, but let us go beyond providing aid, to bring closure to this long, outstanding problem, with all the human loss and suffering it engenders.

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*Original Arabic: Mr ALSALIM (Minister of Labour, Jordan)*

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First of all, allow me, in my own name and on behalf of my colleagues from the Jordanian delegation, to express our heartfelt congratulations to the President of the Conference. We hold him in high esteem and have full confidence in his capacity to conduct our work.

Allow me also to express our thanks to the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for the excellent preparation of the work of the Conference and the unflagging support he has provided to the programmes and projects implemented by the Organization.

I would like to participate in discussions on the questions raised in the Report of the Director-General, which are at the heart of our concerns as governments, employers' organizations and workers' unions. These have gained importance because they relate to what we are doing in our countries. We are placing emphasis on employment and the creation of jobs so as to combat poverty and unemployment, whereas at world level we have seen a sudden increase in the prices of manz articles. Capacity development and the adoption of strategies enabling us to attain the objectives outlined in the reports submitted to us require bilateral cooperation, as well as regional and international cooperation; they also require the support of the International Labour Organization and of other agencies of the United Nations system.

In Jordan, we are striving to achieve economic growth, to improve the productivity of workers and to create jobs so as to put an end to poverty. We have managed to achieve an important rate of economic growth by signing WTO agreements, and this has enabled us to create free trade areas and to increase exports and investments. With the support of His Majesty King Abdullah II, the Ministry of Labour has taken initiatives in order to create decent jobs for Jordanians, focusing on rural areas where there is a very high level of poverty and unemployment. We have done this in particular by supporting

the creation of subsidiary clothing enterprises, so as to create jobs for women in rural areas. This is a joint project between the Ministry of Labour and textile producers in industrial areas.

The cooperation between Jordan and the ILO goes back for many years. In recent times, our cooperation has been accelerated and this has enabled us to launch numerous projects and cooperation programmes, in particular the social dialogue programme, the project to develop the capacity of social partners, and the project on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

I am pleased to inform you that, through tripartite discussions, we have amended labour legislation adopted by the Government and put before Parliament and which covers the following issues: the creation of a tripartite consultation committee on labour issues, the first of its kind in the region; freedom of association and the right to organize, without state interference; rights of immigrant workers to join workers' unions; and the promotion of regular collective bargaining between the parties concerned. Moreover labour law now also covers domestic workers and agricultural workers. We have also presented proposals concerning the development of social security legislation which included the introduction of the unemployment insurance scheme and the establishment of a maternity fund. There are also regulations on the creation of an economic and social council, which has now been established and whose members will soon be appointed.

Jordan shares the concerns of member States regarding the situation in our region, which is experiencing difficult political and humanitarian conditions in particular in the occupied Palestinian territories and Iraq, where unemployment has reached record levels. Remedies to counter this have encountered major difficulties. In these two countries, ensuring social peace and raising the standard of living are matters of urgency and require the creation of appropriate jobs. We must all work together to face these difficulties and to find rapid solutions.

By way of conclusion, I wish this session of our Conference every success and I hope we will strengthen continued cooperation between Jordan and the International Labour Organization.

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*Original Arabic: Ms ABDEL HADY (Minister of Manpower and Migration, Egypt)*

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We have read carefully the Report of the Director-General, which comes at a moment of accelerated events at the international level, including the unprecedented price of food, economic stagnation, the focus of investments on growth, minimal employment creation and the impact of the financial market on employment. These developments have affected living conditions, particularly among poor workers and marginalized groups, migrant workers and their families, those who have special needs, those who are working in the formal sector and women who are suffering discrimination in the world of work.

That being so, we need to take measures in order to remedy these situations. We thus have to reinforce the Decent Work Agenda so as to make it easier to move from one job to another and to resolve the problem of unemployment and its economic and social implications.

Action is also needed to achieve a balance between economic and commercial developments on

the one hand, and stability, social protection and protection of the environment, on the other.

Our efforts to promote decent work at the national level will not be effective unless all international efforts and activities in this domain are coordinated in order to provide employment opportunities, combat poverty and establish an international economic infrastructure for developing countries to implement their development plans.

Given Egypt's commitment to international labour standards and that decent work is the basis of social progress for all societies, we have adopted a national strategy for sustained development based on justice and equality, the reduction of poverty and the creation of decent employment for all so as to encourage innovation. Egypt has adopted a clear strategy of combating child labour by mobilizing the efforts of society. Thus we are currently implementing a project with the International Labour Organization and UNICEF and the World Food Programme to combat child labour. The project, which aims at removing thousands of children from employment, has received encouragement from the President's wife, Suzanne Mubarak, and the Government is adopting programmes to encourage young people to establish their own projects, using microcredit. We expect the Egyptian Government's efforts to provide protection for those with special needs to lead to job opportunities for them and respect for their rights. We also have a strategic framework for Egyptian women aimed at improving their situation and achieving equality with men.

As for decent work, next week will see the start of the implementation of a new project for social dialogue, in cooperation with the ILO and the US Department of Labor. We agree with what the Director-General says in his Report about the importance of sustainable development, on the impact of global warming on conditions of work and on the need to create "green" jobs. This is very important and needs to be supported.

We have also read the Director-General's comments on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories and the report of the United Nations. The Report of the Director-General emphasizes the importance of removing the obstacles that prevent workers and employers in the occupied territories from exercising their rights. This is the main obstacle to peace and to improving the situation of Palestinians. All this has resulted in the Israeli occupation and the building of settlements. We would like to emphasize that no unilateral measures can achieve sustainable peace, and therefore we renew our demand that the construction of settlements and the building of the separation wall be halted.

We call upon the Organization to follow up the situation of workers and employers in the occupied Palestinian territories and we support the request of the Arab Labour Organization that an international conference be held jointly by the ILO and the Arab Labour Organization in order to express support for workers in occupied Arab territories and provide them with aid. We hope that such a conference would lead to results that meet the aspirations of our peoples by helping us to achieve our objectives.

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*Mr PLASKITT (Parliamentary Undersecretary, Department for Work and Pensions, United Kingdom)*

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In 2019, the ILO will celebrate its centenary and I have no doubt that, when that time comes, we will continue to expect the ILO to be a leading voice in

the global fight against poverty and social injustice. So, next year's 90th anniversary provides a perfect opportunity for all of us to reflect on how this Organization's priorities are to be set in the run-up to that centenary.

As I said last year, I am convinced that the ILO is as needed now as it was in 1919. The labour issues that confront us today are different but employment still remains the best route out of poverty. And the need for a strong and effective ILO to promote employment and protect the rights of workers remains constant. But in order to deliver what is required over the next decade, the ILO must continue with both faster and deeper reform. That process has begun; the establishment of an Independent Oversight Advisory Committee, for example, is a move in the right direction. So too, is the decision to discuss the implications of the UN resolution calling for fixed-term limits for heads of all UN bodies.

I also welcome the Governing Body's attempts to improve the transparency and clarity of the programme and budget, and to develop a long-term Strategic Policy Framework. And I also welcome the review of the field structure, which is absolutely crucial to improving the way the Organization supports its constituents. All this work is essential to guarantee the ILO's effectiveness. Furthermore, the tougher fiscal position faced now by most member States will only serve to intensify our scrutiny of the Organization's budget.

I continue to support the ILO's work with the Youth Employment Network. This is a good example of why the ILO is so necessary in the twenty-first century and where it has the potential to add real value. Globally, around 86 million young people are unemployed. They are three times as likely as adults to be jobless. Unless we act, this will be a deepening crisis for today's young people and could lead to social instability in the future. Their need for decent work is urgent. Employment is not just income, it is also a route to social inclusion. Decent work is the best insurance policy against social discontent, civil unrest and even violence. Tomorrow, an event here brings together a number of lead countries in the Youth Employment Network to look at how we might develop specific targets to aim for when promoting youth employment. I look forward to their conclusions.

This year's discussion on strengthening the ILO's capacity will help the ILO adapt its institutional practices and governance so that it makes the best use of its human and financial resources over the next decade. That reform process is essential if the ILO is to perform its true mission. Reform here means greater delivery where it matters.

The ILO has unique strengths. Our duty is to ensure they are used to maximum effect. We can stay steadfast to our principles and improve the way we function. We must work with dedication so that others can work with decency.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr LUQUINDA (Deputy Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security, Angola)*

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It is with great pleasure that I address this labour forum on behalf of the Government of Angola, my delegation and myself. I would like to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of this session and I commend all of those who have been elected to the ILO Governing Body and I trust that you will guide this institution effectively. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratu-

late the ILO for its efforts in promoting social dialogue, eliminating child labour and HIV/AIDS from the world of work, creating decent work for working migrants and for addressing the great challenge of increasing support to member States as they rise to the challenges of globalization and of attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr President, the Republic of Angola welcomes the themes selected for this Conference, especially those related to work and improving professional attitudes with a view to boosting labour productivity and creating jobs which will aid in countries' economic and social development. The Republic of Angola is now one big construction site. Across the country, we are building new vital infrastructure and rebuilding infrastructure that was severely damaged in recent times. We are working towards the major goals of the Government's general programme, namely consolidating national peace and reconciliation, preparing the ground for an integrated and self-sustaining national economy, restoring the central administration of the State nationwide, development of human resources, harmonious territorial development and consolidation of the democratic process.

Since 2002, economic growth has been intense, with a growth in GDP fluctuation starting in 2005. Real cumulative GDP fluctuation from 2002 to 2006 was 89.6 per cent, in other words that rate has almost doubled in just five years. This is certainly a remarkable performance compared to the data available regarding many other countries.

Mr President, with regard to employment figures, a crucial economic variable for domestic economic integration and in guaranteeing national reconciliation and development, available data shows the unemployment rate for 2006 is about 25.2 per cent, a 4 per cent improvement from 2005. This is thanks to rapid job growth in the building sector and fisheries and, to a degree, in non-goods services. In the area of employment, we have drafted and approved the National Employment and Vocational Training Plan and the National Trades and Professions Training Plan. The latter aims to provide training for young people, whether or not they have had schooling, mainly in rural areas. A number of important projects are being carried out which I will enumerate briefly:

- the Programme for the Integration of Young Persons into the Workforce;
- the Young Apprentices Training Programme;
- the Technical and Financial Support for Professional Training Programme;
- the Manager Placement Training Programme;
- the Incentives for Skilled Labour Programme;
- the Young Persons' Temporary Community Work Programme;
- the Women's support and Training Programme;
- the Local Employment Creation Initiatives (ILE);
- the Vocational Support and Integration Programme for Young Persons with Moderate Disabilities and at Risk.

Thanks to these encouraging results, per capita GDP has risen, a good indicator of general living standards.

Real growth in average incomes was 15.3 per cent in 2006 for a population growth of 2.9 per cent. In 2005, that increase was about 17 per cent.

Although national income distribution is uneven, we are expecting an improvement in the poverty

rate. With real growth, public investment in social sectors, effective inflation control measures (inflation was at 12.2 per cent in 2006, and 11.78 per cent in 2007), and with the social inclusion policies which are part of the Government's general plan, we have seen an improvement in living standards, in particular workers' living standards. For this reason we believe that labour is a fundamental element for a globalization which focuses on people. Therefore, the Angolan Government wants to create fair jobs for young people. To this end, my Government, in addition to providing jobs, is seeking to train people so that they can do the jobs offered them. The professional training programme that my Government is providing for young Angolans is a nationwide programme and reaches some of the remotest areas where, until recently, there was no training or even jobs.

These results will come as no surprise to anyone who has been closely watching the policies implemented by the Angolan Government with the support of its social partners. The tripartite structure in Angola is an integral part of government policy. It is a powerful instrument for consultation and it promotes links between the creative spirit of the business community and the initiatives and fundamental needs of workers and the demands of civil society. We believe that, if we are to eradicate poverty, we must build alliances for labour, which is a human need and the key to the solution of social problems and the fight against poverty.

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Mr CHUNG (*Vice-Minister of Labour, Republic of Korea*)

We all agree that globalization offers great opportunity for economic growth, job creation and welfare promotion. However, it also poses challenges and threats such as increasing inequality, polarization, environmental degradation and growing uncertainty in the world economy.

Of course, the ILO has been committed to the decent work initiative, helping to deal with the social dimension of globalization.

The Republic of Korea would like to take this opportunity to extend its support to the ILO's efforts. In this regard, it is timely to consider the fallout from the US financial crisis and discuss the Decent Work Agenda in order to address growing concern over a possible global economic recession.

The latest financial crisis, finance-driven globalization, and the possible global recession mentioned in the Director-General's report remind us of the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s.

The Republic of Korea also experienced economic difficulties during the Asian financial crisis. Our unemployment rate reached a record high. The process of globalization posed great challenges for the Republic of Korea, including the financial crisis ten years ago. However, we have managed to overcome those difficulties by taking advantage of the opportunities globalization provides.

During the Asian crisis, the Korean Government adopted proactive labour market policies, promoting public employment services and intensively investing in skills development. In addition, our Government sought the best way to harness the potential of globalization through deregulation and market opening.

The Republic of Korea took this opportunity to strengthen economic fundamentals. This resulted not only in economic development but also in social progress. In particular, the new administration

launched last February will promote labour relations and make the labour market more dynamic so as to create more and better jobs.

The Government has formed a special consultative body at the regional level, with representatives from labour, management, NGOs and the Government. This body will help foster cooperative and productive industrial relations. In the process, the Government will help those parties improve their capabilities to pursue regional development and resolve labour-management issues on their own.

The Government is also advancing employment services, expanding training opportunities through the skills development account system, and creating more social service jobs with the new Act on Social Enterprise Support. These efforts will create more decent jobs.

The ILO celebrates its 90th anniversary next year. The world has witnessed great economic, social and cultural changes over the past nine decades and the pace of change continues to accelerate in the twenty-first century.

Importantly, as the Director-General's Report underlines, we now have a new form of globalization driven by the financial sector. This new reality requires us to strengthen global governance. The ILO must build on its achievements over the past 90 years, working to empower the ILO so that economic growth translates into social progress. The benefits of globalization must be shared by developed and developing countries alike. To this end, I would like to emphasize that the ILO must establish international labour standards in line with the new era and enable tripartism to evolve in step with a changing labour market.

The Korean Government will continue to strengthen its cooperation with the ILO and expand assistance to the international community in the interest of world prosperity and development through decent work.

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*Original Spanish: Mr LOZANO ALARCÓN (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico)*

The Report presented by Mr Somavia to this Conference raises, in a timely fashion, the issue that the whole world is having to face, with a combination of factors that threaten the stability and sustainable development of our nations. The challenges of this new reality implicitly call for an appropriate response from all those of us who have the responsibility for designing and implementing public policies geared to consolidating decent work.

This context of uncertainty also calls for the committed participation of organizations of workers and employers, so that they, together with governments, can strengthen tripartism, enhance social dialogue and promote measures to overcome the crisis and enable us to fulfil the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, our own national action plans, and the various sectoral programmes that exist.

International food and fuel prices have risen in an extraordinary and unexpected fashion. To this must also be added the extended economic slow-down experienced by the United States and the many effects of climate change. All of this represents a very important challenge which we, together, must face with a high level of responsibility, realism and effectiveness.

Today more than ever, this International Labour Organization has much to say but also much to do.

This combination of circumstances will, whether we like it or not, affect the labour market. It is valid and necessary to insist on the need to seek decent work for all. But first and foremost we need to protect the sources of employment that already exist. In the current conditions, it is valid and legitimate for all our workers and their families to have full access to social security and social benefits. We must continue to struggle to create more jobs in the formal economy. However, with an absolute sense of reality, we must do everything we can to preserve the jobs we have and protect working class purchasing power. We cannot and should not let ourselves become bogged down in the current economic climate. We all hope that what is happening with food and oil prices is a temporary crisis. We, as true statesmen and women, must come up with timely and visionary measures, but we must not neglect the need for long-term measures. In line with what I have just said, the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderón, has put into practice over the last few days a package of measures to guarantee a supply, at competitive prices, of the main inputs that make up the Mexican staple diet. He did the same to support our farmers, and announced new food subsidies for the poorest families. Now more than ever, we must gear our economic policies to social development. The market cannot help all parts of society, and we must therefore recognize that there are deep divisions, structural divisions, in our societies. The subsidies should therefore continue to be given while those differences exist. Social justice remains undoubtedly something we still need to achieve and something we must constantly work towards in our collective conscience.

We must not fall into the temptation of retreating from what we have already achieved. Labour conditions in the world today are much better than they were a few decades ago. We are going through difficult times but these difficulties are not necessarily structural or permanent in nature. These are also times for us to reiterate our commitment to defending and guaranteeing the collective rights of workers. This is a time of economic competence and productivity in industrial relations. They are turbulent and challenging times. However, we must not solve economic problems at the expense of workers' rights. The economic environment should not become a pretext for violating or undermining labour rights. But workers' organizations must have sensitivity, realism and commitment to their own sources of employment. Collective rights must be respected and guaranteed, but their exercise must also take place in the framework of the law and of institutions.

These are difficult times and the legitimate aspirations of a better income for workers must be achieved through productivity, not through artificial measures such as price controls or the wage increases that are not linked to wealth creation. What we need to seek is productivity in industrial relations in order to do more with less, and to reward individual and collective effort in the workplace. Let us promote attitudes in favour of training and occupational safety and health. These things should not be seen as a burden for employers and workers, but as an investment for achieving greater productivity.

The ILO, to which we all belong, has a key role to play in this respect. As Members, we expect from the ILO administration effective and transparent

management of resources. We also expect proportionality between contributions, needs and benefits. New times of cooperation and collaboration will come; these will be times of support and exchange of information and experiences for the common good.

At the global level, it is also desirable that we reconsider the public policies that promote the production of corn-based fuels. Such fuels have an impact on international prices, lead to shortages and create market distortions. Let us instead think about the development of alternative biofuels that combine better use of land, lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, fewer inflationary pressures, and greater respect for sustainable human development. We must be able to come up with innovative, audacious and responsible schemes in which we can reconcile human food security, fundamental freedoms, respect for the environment, economic competence, a legal framework for investment, and the creation of well-paid jobs in the formal economy.

Mexico today reiterates its commitment to progress, international solidarity and the fundamental rights of workers. We are in favour of protecting workers' purchasing power, decent work and productivity. I call on you to remain united and consistent with the principles of the International Labour Organization, and to remain aware of the difficult times in which we find ourselves. There are countless reasons for pursuing our efforts; history will bear witness to our actions, and to our omissions. Let us be proactive participants, not passive spectators, in the face of these global challenges. These are our times, these are our duties.

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Mr VENKATARAMINI (*Employer, India*)

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The Conference is taking place at a time when two countries of the Asian continent – Myanmar and China – are trying to heal the scars of natural calamity of an unprecedented scale, taking a heavy toll of human lives and property. We express our sympathy and solidarity with them and I request this august house to urge the ILO to extend all possible support to put life back on track in these countries.

The ILO deserves wide acclaim for framing a cohesive and integrated agenda, focusing on rural employment and skills development. Rural employment is a lifeline to countries' social and economic health, particularly in developing countries, where a majority of the population lives in rural areas. In 2005, 71 per cent of the world's rural population lived in Asia. In India, 70 per cent of people still live in rural areas and more than 30 per cent of the rural population is poor. The economic hardship of rural life and lack of employment opportunities force them to migrate to cities, choking urban infrastructure. Promotion of jobs in rural areas is therefore an imperative. A strategic framework combining the elements of skills and entrepreneurship development is necessary to promote rural employment. The ILO's technical support programme can provide useful interventions in this context.

The informalization of jobs and lower growth of organized sector employment, which are mentioned in the Director-General's Report, is a global phenomenon. Organized sector employment will further diminish with changes in technology and modes of production, and the process cannot be reversed. Most jobs in the informal sector are in the self-employment category. What is important is to improve the quality of jobs through skills develop-

ment, adequate social security and health and safety at work.

In India, 92 per cent of the workforce, close to 430 million people, are in the unorganized sector and a massive strategy is under way to cover this sector under the social security programme. Similarly, India has embarked upon a massive skill-building programme called Modular Employable Skill, which will help the informal sector to a great extent. The ILO should complement these national efforts through appropriate programmes.

Further, freedom of association, which is the subject of this year's Global Report, and raises some concerns, needs more consideration. In India, freedom of association is a constitutional guarantee and finds strong support in other labour statutes even without ratifying 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), as we feel that it is a vital part of our democratic process. Non-ratification of ILO instruments should therefore be seen in the overall social and political context of a country.

Let me mention here that the Government of India has taken an initiative to strengthen skills development and vocational training through public-private participation and encouraging results are forthcoming. Further, we feel that there is a need to look at the skills policy to prepare for green job opportunities. A sustainable enterprise is key to generate jobs and contribute to the national economy. In order to develop sustainable enterprises, a flexible institutional environment to respond to the changing needs is necessary. Rule of law and recognition of private property are critical to it. We welcome the Director-General's Report in this context. These are some of my observations with these words I once again thank you for giving me this opportunity.

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*Original Arabic: Mr AL-DOSARI (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Qatar)*

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We are honoured to address your august assembly on our own behalf, and on behalf of the Member countries of the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which groups the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Yemen.

I am also pleased to pay respects to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for the efforts he has made to serve the objectives of this Organization. The agenda of this Conference contains a certain number of vital issues relating to individual men and women, and society, which require elaborating upon and implementing. For instance, there is a need to strengthen capacities in order to improve productivity, promote the ILO's role in technical cooperation and examine other matters concerning the Organization's activities and programmes. Due respect must also be given to the Report of the Director-General, *Decent work – Some strategic challenges ahead*. We would like to stress the determination of our countries to modernize political, economic and social tools with a view to bringing about balanced development, by adopting a positive relationship with social policies within a framework of global economic development and promoting the concept of decent work.

We hope that, during this session, we shall achieve positive outcomes likely to consolidate the ILO's efforts to attain the objectives of decent work and development.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the cooperation between the Member countries of the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs of the Gulf Cooperation Council, on the one hand, and the ILO and its Regional Office in Beirut, on the other hand, in the area of projects and programmes, to which our countries attach a high priority. We reaffirm the need to strengthen the ILO Regional Office by having specialized experts and advisers in various fields who have mastered the Arabic language, in order to meet the technical cooperation needs of the Gulf Cooperation Council; they would also help the member countries to modernize their legislation and their policies, and to strengthen their capacity to overhaul their labour and employment administrations.

The policies of the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council are based on openness towards the international community, and on cooperation with friendly countries, international organizations and specialized agencies. The members of the Council, anxious to promote a partnership between these States and labour-exporting countries in Asia and acting on an initiative of the United Arab Emirates, initiated a dialogue on these lines in the Gulf region. As a result, 11 Ministers of Labour from Asian labour-exporting countries met with those from nine labour-importing countries, that is, the Gulf Cooperation countries, as well as from Yemen, Singapore and Malaysia, at the Ministerial Consultation in Abu Dhabi. The theme of the Consultation, in which the International Organization of Migration (IOM) participated, was contractual labour of the Asian countries of origin and Gulf countries of destination. This meeting reflected the efforts of the said Council to strengthen cooperation on temporary employment and contractual labour issues, in order to guarantee the rights of all the partners; both exporters and importers of labour.

This initiative was the first of its kind, designed to establish a regional dialogue and to administer efficiently the movement of foreign temporary labour. The findings of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue revealed that the manpower in the Gulf Cooperation countries was, indeed, of a temporary nature. The workers did not emigrate with a view to settling in these countries, but arrived with temporary contracts to carry out a specific job, at the end of which they returned to their countries of origin, in accordance with procedures laid down in the legislation in force in both the labour-exporting and labour-importing countries. This formula has a positive impact on the economies of both groups of countries. We hope that our Organization will adopt the notion of temporary contract labour with respect to the type of employment situation existing in our countries.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also started applying legislation on unemployment insurance, making it a forerunner among the Arab States in this field. This law applies to all workers, both nationals and foreigners, in accordance with ILO Conventions. The Kingdom of Bahrain is therefore a pioneer when it comes to combating discrimination and guaranteeing justice and equality for all workers, irrespective of their nationality.

As regards youth employment and decent work, we should like to commend the initiative of Her

Highness Sheik Mozah bint Nasser, the wife of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, who presides over the institution known as “The Link”. This institution sets out to find employment for young people from the Middle East and North Africa, by creating a link with employers in these various countries and encouraging them to carry out projects for young people. His Excellency the Emir has made a donation of US\$100 million to support this institution, which will strive to establish international partnerships based on private initiatives to target youth employment opportunities by means of modern communication technologies. His Highness last year inaugurated the work of the Doha Summit on Arab Youth and Employment Opportunities, held on 1–2 June last. The first stage of the project was launched by Qatar, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia and the Syrian Arab Republic; it will later include other countries from the Middle East and North Africa. The Administrative Council of this institution “The Link” includes many former Heads of State and directors of important international companies.

Turning to the discussion of the Reports of the Director-General, I should like to pay tribute to the Director-General for his Report, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* and his recognition of the need to adopt urgent measures to support workers and employers in Palestine and in the occupied Arab territories, and to implement the necessary programmes to improve their situation at a time when the economic situation is deteriorating as a result of the occupation and the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people by the occupation authorities. We should also continue funding and assisting the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection so that it might fulfil its role of supporting Palestinian workers.

We sincerely hope that this Conference will move towards strengthening our Organization so that it might attain its objectives of decent work and social dialogue, and play a role in achieving progress for the whole of humankind. We should like to state the resolve of all our countries to help our Organization fulfil its goals.

*(Mr Louh takes the Chair.)*

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Mr FOULKES (*Minister of Maritime Affairs and Labour, Bahamas*)

The Director-General, in his Report to this Conference this morning, called on member States to focus on ensuring that the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO remains a central theme for harnessing the positive potential of globalization. At our last address to this Conference, we pledged to: strengthen and improve labour administration; further strengthen the Government’s labour relations through bipartite and tripartite consultations; institute a more effective system for the settlement of disputes between employers and employees; and assist our youth through the establishment of incentives for economic empowerment.

As Minister of Maritime Affairs and Labour, I am proud to report to this august body that the Bahamas is well on its way towards fulfilling all of the stated objectives and we have started by signing our DWCP in April of this year. We have set as our goals: the institutional strengthening of the Department of Labour; ensuring that social dialogue is central to the making of public policy; and the

strengthening of labour legislation and rights at work.

Additionally, we have, along with our social partners and with the assistance of the ILO’s Regional Office, begun to establish a list of hazardous occupations that will apply to all children in the Bahamas under the age of 18 years. We have also institutionalized our TRIFOR initiative that sees the coming together of the Government, workers’ unions and employers’ organizations twice a month to discuss labour relations within the Bahamas.

We in the Bahamas pride ourselves on having one of the best maritime communities in the world.

Our team of professionals has seen our country develop its maritime initiatives to where we have the third largest ship registry and, indeed, the largest cruise ship registry.

We are therefore extremely proud to report that we have signed on to the “super” Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and that we were the first to do so in our region.

We are very serious when it comes to the welfare of the seafarers and shipowners of our country and we believe that the “super” Maritime Labour Convention establishes the decent work requirements that are so necessary for the maritime sector.

We therefore pledge our continued support for full ratification by all maritime countries of this most important instrument.

The Bahamas Government recognizes that the future development of any country rests with its youth and, in this regard, our Government has recently engaged in a programme to assist our youth in becoming entrepreneurs.

We have provided seed money for our youth who qualify, and provide them with assistance in setting up their own businesses, because we believe that the successes of any country requires a viable and sustainable entrepreneurial base.

Tripartite cooperation and social dialogue are alive and well in the Bahamas and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the leadership of our umbrella organizations for their participation and their support.

We again highlight the Director-General’s call for major research and policy effort on the part of the ILO, in conjunction with other international agencies, to determine the effects of a paradigm shift within the context of altering work patterns due to climate change.

If we are to reverse the current destructive path of global warming, we must move towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

I once again would like to thank Dr Anna Teresa Romero and her wonderful team at the Subregional Office in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, for their support. We are proud of their accomplishments over the years and we encourage them to keep up the good work.

I wish to reiterate my country’s call for a unified tripartite approach to advancing the critical work of the ILO and the even more critical value of social dialogue to this process – a process that must, of necessity, yield a fair globalization and decent work for all.

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*Original Farsi: Mr JAHROMI (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran)*

The Global Report that relates to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, like the other two earlier Global Reports on the

same subject published in 2000 and 2004, hinges on the goal of decent work for all, and the third occurrence of this subject in less than a decade is indicative of the great importance the ILO attaches to the Declaration.

Freedom of association is essential to trade union activities and may lead to the promotion of other civil liberties. Regretfully, unilateralism and restrictions on access to technology by industrialized countries, together with their unfair distribution of capital and market access opportunities, are reason enough for developing countries to face serious challenges that lead to the deterioration of sound industrial relations between the States and their social partners.

If the ILO recommends collective bargaining as a means to overcome the crisis arising from changing patterns in technology and unfair globalization, it should also consider the feebleness of the respective associations and their understanding of the international labour market.

The practice of monopolistic activities by certain social partners, and its adverse effect on the principle of freedom of association and on the proactive participation of real representatives, is one of the negative manifestations of the new industrial relations and tripartism.

ILO regional offices therefore must vigilantly and without prejudice try to find the roots of monopolism and its anti-democratic mechanism in the context of technical cooperation missions.

Governments need to identify their social partners through sound and impartial registration and make sure that they enter into negotiation with those who enjoy full and legitimate representation. Otherwise, collective bargaining in respect to setting minimum wages, employment policies and other concerns will not lead to dependable results which in turn will ensure the principles of freedom of association.

Among the challenges that various governments around the world are facing, we can refer to multiplicity and non-transparency of trade unions and employers' organizations, their guarded conservatism versus the prevailing labour market requirements, inefficiency in providing training and services, lack of dynamism and losing legitimacy and membership.

The aforementioned factors would lead to illegitimacy of the representative organizations and ensuing coalition and solidarity crises in the respective workers' and employers' organizations.

In view of international experiences and our national practices, we are of the opinion that any development in terms of freedom of association will arise from the cultural, ideological and national contexts of the respective nations and no paradigm may be institutionalized in any given culture unless it is first localized.

Our experiences in the Islamic Republic of Iran indicate that genuine cooperation between the real workers' and employers' organizations will break new ground in industrial relations. Adhering to the spirit of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), therefore, the Government, together with its social partners, has been seeking to provide an enabling environment for the further promotion of the principle of freedom of association.

Meanwhile, along with the increase in the number of free and independent trade unions, the number of workers' complaints have decreased considerably.

This perhaps best indicates the relationship between independent trade union rights and proper management of labour disputes. Owing to full and frank trilateral negotiations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, we have witnessed a drastic reduction in the number of complaints, as stated above, to the tune of 24 per cent. Furthermore, free trade unions play an instrumental role in the sustainability of our industrial enterprises and constructive cooperation from the workers.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has embarked on the regulation of its national industrial relations in the context of decent work by amending the Labour Law. We are happy to note that the number of Iranian trade unions has almost tripled, within the last two years, to reach 4,000 independent trade unions, as well as a 40 per cent increase in independent employers' associations, which now number 1,486.

We are of the conviction that, for the promotion of ratification of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, it is necessary that the social partners, while further strengthening their collective bargaining power, trade union rights and education, work for a win-win, mutually acceptable solution.

On behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I need to say that there is a need for new studies when it comes to Conventions Nos 87 and 98, pertaining to pluralism and the previous conditions and historical background of different countries.

Also I need to thank the secretariat for their efforts in preparing some comments on the occupied Arab territories. It seems that grave problems, such as continuing insecurity for Palestinians, depressed labour markets, poverty and food dependency, the isolation of Gaza, checkpoints, controls and restricted movement and international closures continue to adversely affect the daily lives of the Palestinian people and persistently deprive them of decent work and decent life opportunities.

At the end of my comments I need to point out that, in the speech by my dear brother, the Qatari Minister, the gentlemen used the word "Gulf". I would like to bring to your attention the correct name of that body of water, which is the Persian Gulf. In all documents of the United Nations and international organizations such wording is correctly used and I needed to refer to that in my comments.

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Ms SUNDNES (*Worker, Norway*)

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As a newly elected Worker member of the Governing Body, I look forward to a fruitful cooperation on the topics presented in the Report and the appendices.

There is much good work performed by the ILO on the Decent Work Agenda, and I especially appreciate the focus given to the promotion of standards, as well as tripartism and social dialogue. The social partners in Norway and our Government are hosting a conference on decent work on 5 September this year, and we are very happy that Mr Somavia and Pascal Lamy from the World Trade Organization (WTO) have agreed to be the key speakers at this conference. We think that putting employment and decent work at the heart of economic policy-making is the way of the future for us all.

The most pressing topic in the trade union movement in Norway now is the question of social

dumping. Good jobs are available. Wages are good. Many workers are coming from the Baltic countries, as well as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, among others, to seek employment. In most cases they are well treated, but we have also seen quite a few cases of foreign workers being badly treated by irresponsible employers.

Due to hard surveillance work from the trade unions, an efficient labour inspection system and good collective agreements in most industries, we have been able to disclose such behaviour and solve the problems for our colleagues. The recent implementation of Convention No. 94 also proves to be a good tool to prevent social dumping.

Unfortunately, the employers' organizations do not share this view. They claim that the Convention is outdated and protectionist. Fortunately, many of our industries do not agree with such a view. When these cases reach the mass media, I am happy to report that a majority of public opinion agrees that social dumping is a shameful way to treat people.

Trade unions in Norway also share your concern for the Palestinian workers and their families, as shown in the well-documented report on the occupied Arab territories. The situation for the Palestinian people is now worse than ever, socially, economically and politically. This affects the workers very badly. I have noted that one of the effects is an increase in child labour. I also note with regret that the unemployment rate is the highest among young people and among skilled women, exactly the employment resources that Palestine needs in order to cope with the problems the country is facing. The trade unions in Norway are pledging their support to the Palestinian workers and will continue to do so.

Another deep concern we share is the concern for the situation of women workers and the lack of women's representation, both in the Governing Body, in the ILO, and at the annual conferences. The representation of women must improve. As long as women's wages are on average 15 per cent less than men's, and as long as women are meeting the glass ceiling, whether it be in the trade unions or at company levels, there will be no decent work.

I salute the decision taken by the ILO to hold a thorough discussion of gender issues at next year's session of the Conference, and a follow-up the two subsequent years, with the aim of drawing up a Convention on domestic workers. This is an excellent strategy to combine theory and practice with the aim of securing decent work and a decent life for women workers.

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Mr ITO (*Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan*)

I would first like to express my deepest sympathy to those who have been affected by the cyclone in Myanmar and the earthquake in China. Our Government is sending support, and I hope for swift recovery for our neighbours.

Next year will mark the 90th anniversary of the ILO. Japan has a long relationship with the ILO, so let me look back for a moment by way of preparing for the celebration. Eighty years ago Japan welcomed the first visit of the Director of the ILO, Mr Albert Thomas. He observed the situation of cotton-mill workers and exchanged views with young officials from the newly born Bureau of Social Affairs.

He also met 88-year-old Eiichi Shibusawa, known as "the father of Japanese capitalism". Born as a farmer during the feudal period, Shibusawa was

elevated to the samurai class at the end of that period. He then served as a senior official of the new reformist government, and later became a successful entrepreneur. His contribution to the State won him the title of baron, and subsequently viscount.

Admitting his role in introducing capitalism and industrialism to Japan, Shibusawa declared: "It was necessary, and I do not regret it." But he immediately added that industrialism causes some distress and told Mr Thomas that: "I regard it as my duty to correct, or rather to supplement, what I have done by helping to obtain recognition for the trade unions in negotiations with the employers, and by promoting the restoration of stability and harmony." Later, in his report to the Governing Body, Mr Thomas recalled that he had heard this remark "not without emotion" and appreciated the spirit in which it was spoken.

Eighty years on, the spirit of Shibusawa's comment appears to remain as relevant as ever. It was recognition by a business leader that the innovative and productive function of the market must be supplemented by a perspective of balance and equity, and that social dialogue was of the utmost importance.

Perhaps more strikingly, if we replace the term "industrialism" with "globalization", his comment even resonates with our perception of today's world in a wider sense. We do not deny globalization, but we are concerned about, and take action on, the social dimension of globalization. Indeed, although the creation of a "universal peace" has been the aim of the ILO from the outset, global interdependence has never been felt more acutely than in the current world. Climate change is one issue reflecting this trend.

Last month we welcomed Director-General Juan Somavia to the coastal city of Niigata, where the G8 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting was held. Our agenda included the balance between employment and environment, and Mr Somavia led the discussion by identifying the key issues for green job strategies. We are happy to announce the adoption of the "Niigata Global-Balance Principle", a pledge to promote social dialogue and cooperation at the workplace with a view to achieving a coherent balance of growth, employment, productivity and concern for the environment.

In realization of this pledge, and in realization of the wider goal of decent work in Japan, we will continue to look to the Director-General for leadership. In this age of global interdependence, the ILO's expertise has become indispensable. That is why the strengthening of the ILO's capacity is so important. We give our full support to the discussion held in this Conference, but the real work has only just begun. Japan will continue to be interested in discussing how to steer the ILO in the right direction to provide support for constituents effectively and efficiently.

Japan commits itself further to play its part as a firm believer in decent work, particularly in a concerted regional effort under the Asian decent work Decade. Working together with the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Japan will continue its endeavour towards 2015.

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Mr SULKA (*Government, Albania*)

The top priority of our programming angle remains the development of new capacities as well as updating the existing cognizance demanded by the

labour market. The increase of the qualitative and quantitative level of our capacities reflects this priority.

We have focused in various directions. For the first time and through cooperation with vocational and educational training systems, we have decided to promote the maximum use of existing human and material resources. In addition, the relevant strategy of education and vocational training reflects this cooperation which allows the confirmation of the institutions that will manage and administer this system. These institutions carry out the drafting of the programmes and curricula, as well as the assessment of cognitive level and their standardization.

We also focused our attention on another orientation, which was the improvement of the vocational educational training system capacities, aiming at a better coverage of labour market needs, especially those of the poorest regions, with the right professions. Through this initiative, we have achieved an increase of 20 per cent in the number of public centres that provide vocational training services. One of them is a mobile centre to be used to cover a specific zone: with specific needs, requirements and conditions.

Keeping in mind the specific characteristics of our country, we believe that flexibility is a necessary condition for its labour market. Using an employment promotion fund, which has been increased by 70 per cent during this year, we have been able to implement professional training activities within different businesses and private enterprises, and in various zones which cannot be covered with services provided by the local vocational training centres, or which lack difference, vocational courses, whose curricula are not yet part of the vocational training programmes.

In this context, one might notice that, for certain zones, where those practices have been applied for the first time, efficiency has reached a high level in regard to later employment, which goes almost above 70 per cent. At the same time one might discover an increase of the income levels for individuals and for their families.

As ours continues to be an economy in transition, especially from the point of view of privatization of some branches of our economy, we have prepared, in close cooperation with the ILO and with the financial support of partner countries, different programmes with the purpose of achieving integration for those employees who remain jobless owing to the privatization of their enterprises, by training them in a way geared to labour market requirements.

The tripartite philosophy, consultation with other actors, and with employers and employees, comprises the core work of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The past year was quite a heavy year as far as drafting different policy documents is concerned. We have compiled a number of strategies for different sectors, whether those of labour markets or those of social issues, and the important feature that characterizes these documents is the philosophy of inclusion which reflects the close cooperation between the Government and social partners, by inviting them to participate in different activities organized in this regard, and at the same time making them part of the National Labour Council. The National Labour Council is a very important consulting institution for policy, not only for the Ministry of Labour, but for other ministries as well. It has undergone significant development, widening the range of the actors involved with the purpose of attracting ideas from a wide range of actors and partners interested in development.

Working in a project of the ILO, we are trying to increase the capacities of this institution and, at the same time, to expand its activities at the regional level as a necessity for the development of labour relations in an institutional way in particular where the interests and obligations of partners clash.

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*Original Arabic:* The PRESIDENT

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We can now adjourn the sixth sitting of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

*(The Conference adjourned at 12.55 p.m.)*

## Seventh sitting

Monday, 9 June 2008, 2 p.m.

*Presidents: Mr Tabani, Ms Diallo, Mr Louh*

### RECORD VOTE ON THE RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING THE ARREARS OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMOROS, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, IRAQ AND THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

The PRESIDENT

I declare open the seventh sitting of this session of the International Labour Conference.

The first item on our agenda is the record on the resolutions concerning the arrears of contributions of four countries. They were published in *Provisional Record* No. 11-1 and are the following: resolution concerning the arrears of contributions of Comoros, resolution concerning the arrears of contributions of the Central African Republic, resolution concerning the arrears of contributions of Iraq and resolution concerning the arrears of contributions of the Solomon Islands.

Let me recall that, in conformity with article 13, paragraph 4, of the Constitution of the ILO, the Conference may, by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the delegates present, permit a member of the Organization, which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contribution to vote if the Conference is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member. Under article 19, paragraph 5, of the Standing Orders of the Conference, such a vote must be a record vote.

We shall now proceed to a record vote on the four resolutions.

*(A record vote is taken.)*

The result of the vote is as follows.

In the case of Comoros: 257 votes in favour, 19 against, with 8 abstentions. The number of votes cast is 284, which falls short of the quorum which is 304. Therefore, we will have to vote again tomorrow on this resolution.

The second resolution in favour of the Central African Republic: 257 votes in favour, 19 against, with 9 abstentions. The number of votes cast is 284, which falls short of the quorum which is 304. Therefore, we will have to vote again tomorrow on this resolution.

The third resolution in favour of Iraq: 257 votes in favour, 18 against, with 9 abstentions. The number of votes cast is 284, which falls short of the quorum which is 304. Therefore, we will have to vote again tomorrow on this resolution.

The fourth resolution in favour of the Solomon Islands: 260 votes in favour, 19 against, with 5 abstentions. The number of votes cast is 284, which

falls short of the quorum which is 304. Therefore, we will have to vote again tomorrow on this resolution.

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

The PRESIDENT

Let us now resume our discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Mr IQBAL (*Minister for Labour and Employment, Bangladesh*)

Since taking up membership in 1972, Bangladesh has played an active role in the ILO and benefited from a constructive association with the Organization.

It gives me immense pleasure that this year Bangladesh has been elected as a titular member of the Governing Body. I extend my sincere gratitude to all Members and especially to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan for their flexibility and support.

I congratulate Mr Somavia, the ILO Director-General, on his very informative and forward-looking Report. It gives us clear guidelines for action.

In line with the ILO programmes relating to decent work and safety net, Bangladesh has successfully implemented ILO decent work pilot programmes in some specific sectors. We seek more technical support from the ILO for implementing our ongoing programmes and for undertaking new ones.

We have developed a Decent Work Country Programme 2006–09 in collaboration with the ILO. The programme addresses post-MFA challenges, promotion of decent and productive employment, elimination of the worst forms of child labour and fulfilment of workers' rights in the export processing zones.

The Government undertook a project entitled "Safe and Environment-Friendly Ship Recycling" that was completed in December 2007. We are keen to implement the lessons learnt from this project for improving working conditions in this growing sector.

Bangladesh is committed to the implementation of international labour standards. We have ratified 33 ILO Conventions, including seven out of eight core Conventions.

We have been considering core Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment. Our national Constitution, laws and policies

recognize the effective abolition of child labour. The new updated and unified Labour Law of 2006 has provisions for the prevention and elimination of child labour, particularly concerning children engaged in hazardous work.

We have also finalized the “Elimination of Child Labour Policy”. The Government has introduced a new law entitled “The Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Law 2006” for both the formal and informal sectors. During November 2006, the Government declared the minimum wages for different grades of garment workers after extensive consultations with workers’ and employers’ organizations.

The Government has also taken other specific measures to combat child labour. Following the signing of an MoU on child labour with the ILO in 1994, a number of projects are being undertaken. Presently the Government, in collaboration with ILO/IPEC, is implementing a time-bound programme for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. The Government has also taken up a project entitled “Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour, Phase 2” after successful completion of its first phase. The current phase aims at withdrawing 30,000 child labourers, ranging from 5 to 14 years of age, from risky jobs by providing non-formal education and skills development training.

We attach top priority to the ready-made garments sector, since it is the largest export-oriented manufacturing industry of Bangladesh with approximately 2.5 million workers, 80 percent of whom are women. The Government signed a tripartite MoU with workers and employers on 12 July 2006. As a follow-up to the MoU, a social compliance forum and a crisis management committee have been set up with the participation of the stakeholders for continuous monitoring and enforcement of the new minimum wages and immediate resolution of unexpected incidents.

Our RMG sector has been declared child-labour free. On eight fundamental issues like letters of appointment, ID card to workers, normal and overtime hours of work, weekly rest day, minimum wage and its timely payment, and maternity leave with benefit, the compliance by our garments industry is very encouraging. The Government, in collaboration with the employers’ associations, trade unions and NGOs, keeps close watch for their constant improvement. Like RMG, the personal health, hygiene and safety measures for workers are being taken in our shrimp and fish-processing industries.

The present Government has taken initiatives to strengthen vocational training for the unemployed and unskilled manpower. Thirty-six technical training centres, including six exclusively for women, are conducting customized training programmes. Welfare committees with workers representatives for each factory have been formed to address matters that affect workers. Despite our sincere efforts, unemployment remains an acute problem. In order to alleviate this scenario, we require further assistance from the ILO and development partners for expanding the scope of skills development programmes conducted by the Government.

In conclusion, let me state that Bangladesh is addressing the challenges it faces to improve the condition of its working population and remains committed to implementing applicable international labour standards. We seek international cooperation and support from the ILO in our efforts to promote decent work and livelihoods in the country.

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*Original German: Ms MAREK (State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, Austria)*

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In my presentation, I shall focus on Austria in the context of globalization and the strategic challenges facing the ILO. Austria is keen to address the challenges of globalization and take advantage of the opportunities, but at the same time, and this has always been our concern, to provide decent work. Thanks to the highest rate of real economic growth since the year 2000, together with reforms which have involved incorporating the independent and self-employed in our unemployment scheme, as well as a successful active labour market policy, Austria is now approaching full employment. In fact, we are right at the top of the EU league with an unemployment rate of only 4.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2008.

Despite these positive developments, we note declining domestic demand. Therefore, workers must be allowed to participate more fully in the success of businesses. Austria places great value on worker participation and is also planning to introduce substantial tax relief for income from gainful employment starting in 2010.

By ensuring that the social partners are involved in shaping policies, Austria is adopting a successful path to take advantage of the opportunities of globalization. Our new foreign trade programme was drawn up jointly by the relevant ministries and institutions and the social partners, and this foreign trade programme clearly requires that the process of globalization be shaped in such a way that all groups of the population have equal access to its advantages. In this foreign trade programme, Austria commits to ensuring that recognized standards, such as the ILO core labour standards, are enshrined in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements so that competition does not take place to the detriment of workers’ rights and the environment.

Austria will continue to support the Director-General’s commitment to sustainability, internationally coherent policies and a socially acceptable approach to international, economic and finance policies. In this context, we welcome the joint ILO/OECD Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility to be held in Paris on 23–24 June.

This should not lead us to neglect other urgent concerns, such as demographic change and the core responsibilities of the ILO, in particular strengthening labour legislation, including reinforcing social dialogue and the standards system. Besides promoting core labour standards, it is important to continue to give further emphasis to improving working conditions in other areas.

Strategies for 2009–15 should contain specific measures for the ratification and implementation of the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187). There are other important issues at stake, namely strengthening labour market institutions based on social dialogue and also reinforcing labour inspection authorities and social partnership institutions, and here Austria will make a focused contribution.

In the context of increased demands for flexibility in working life, Austria is continuing to follow the flexicurity approach. Here I would like to emphasize the importance of the “One UN” process. Austria, in particular, welcomes the commitment of the Director-General to this process. One key objective is the promotion of better coordination and consis-

tency within the UN system with more productive use of limited resources to remove overlapping and duplication, and thus achieve synergies. Therefore, we look forward to further efforts on the part of the ILO in this direction and also to tangible results being achieved in the foreseeable future.

In closing, may I express my happiness over the adoption, by consensus, of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. Here, the Members of the ILO commit to promoting the Decent Work Agenda. Austria has participated extensively in this whole process and would describe the ILO's approach as visionary in its determination to adapt to the new challenges arising in the context of globalization and to strengthen its efforts to promote decent work. As a newly elected member of the Governing Body, Austria will continue to make an active and committed contribution to the task of giving life to this Declaration.

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*Ms RAMSAMY (Government, Mauritius)*

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The Global Report, the third of its kind, covering the rights and principles of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right of collective bargaining, marks the 60th anniversary of the adoption of Convention No. 87. This Convention, and its sister Convention No. 98, are essential tenets for the promotion of human rights, and they underpin democracy and social and economic development in most countries. Mauritius has ratified both Conventions, as well as the other core Conventions of the ILO.

The Government of Mauritius, with the assistance of the International Labour Office, is presently in the process of finalizing its labour law reforms. The new legislation on employment relations will further improve the industrial relations environment in Mauritius and provide all social partners with the requisite tools to better face the emerging challenges and opportunities in the constantly changing world of work. The proposed legislation embodies values and intents inherent to the Constitution of the ILO and the two Conventions on freedom of association.

Collective bargaining will be the main thrust of this new legislation. The Government of Mauritius believes that collective bargaining is an effective means of building constructive relations and trust between the parties. It is our belief also that only solutions built on trust enjoy genuine support and adherence, and are likely to last. As the right to strike is intrinsic to the right of association, provisions have been made in the new legislation to adequately address this issue. Emphasis is being laid, however, on the need to exhaust conciliation and mediation procedures before resorting to industrial action.

In the strategy of economic reforms in which Mauritius is currently engaged and which is geared towards higher growth and equitable distribution of the benefits of this growth, the role and contribution of employers' and workers' organizations are determinant. In such a context, workers' organizations can become important change agents. They can contribute effectively to facilitate the transition towards more modern economic and social structures, and through their participation in tripartite dialogue, help reduce any hardship which such transition may at times generate.

Freedom of association cannot be dissociated from the obligation of workers' as well as employ-

ers' organizations to respect the laws of the land. It is regrettable that, recently, totally unfounded allegations of infringement of trade union rights have been levelled against the Government of Mauritius by some in a case where there has been non-compliance with the provisions of the law.

Mauritius is a democratic State where there is clear separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The rule of law prevails and, consequently, everyone including trade unions is under an obligation to comply with the provisions of the law of the land. No one should be above the law.

In the implementation of the principles of freedom of association, the Government of Mauritius recognizes the crucial role played by the Committee on Freedom of Association in dealing with allegations of infringements of the right of association.

Recently, the Committee examined an allegation of violation of 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), levelled against the Government of Mauritius. We regret that facts submitted by the Government, and which we deem to be of utmost importance in the analysis of the case, do not appear to have obtained the attention they deserve by the Committee in arriving at its conclusions. This has, to some extent, undermined the efforts undertaken by the Government over the years to promote social dialogue and better understanding between all social partners. This situation is also somewhat prejudicial to the image of Mauritius, which has always been, and remains, a vibrant democracy, where fundamental rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and are strictly observed.

The Government of Mauritius has embarked on a new economic agenda, which aims to achieve sustainable development and assure decent livelihood to each and every citizen of the Republic. This agenda puts emphasis, inter alia, on decent work as a productive factor, on entrepreneurship and private investment, on promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, and on poverty alleviation.

On the subject of poverty alleviation, the Government hosted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) International Conference on Poverty and Development in April 2008. The main outcome of the Conference was the signing by the SADC Heads of State and Government of the SADC Declaration on Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development. The Declaration identifies seven priority areas requiring urgent attention, namely, food security, climate change, energy, trade, education, health and infrastructure development.

The agenda of this session of the Conference includes for discussion important issues such as the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, and skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development. The resolutions to be adopted by this session of the Conference on these issues will undoubtedly help member States implement country-specific strategies to promote productive employment and decent work.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Mauritius to the fundamental principles and rights at work as enunciated in 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), and to social dialogue and tripartism.

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*Original Russian: Ms DENISOVA (Government, Ukraine)*

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Our Government shares and endorses the conclusions of the Report of the Director-General, *Decent work: some strategic challenges ahead*. The Government of Ukraine also supports the ILO's efforts to promote global sustainable economical and social development by strengthening the principles and mechanisms of social dialogue.

In expressing our support for the ideals of decent work, and understanding some of the strategic challenges in the future, I must emphasise that the creation of the economic conditions for decent work is one of the top priorities of our Government's work. This is supported both by the employers and the workers of the Ukraine.

Our Government restored social dialogue in the first 100 days of its work. A conciliation agreement has been signed with the Federation of Trade Unions, with which we had been in dispute since 2006. We concluded a Memorandum on Partnership with all the national trade unions. We have completed collective negotiations that lasted more than two years and have concluded a general agreement between the Cabinet, the relevant ministries, and the organizations of workers and employers, for the period 2008–09. We have renewed the Government's participation in the work of the National Tripartite Socio-Economic Council.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of our Government, to thank our social partners for their constructive attitude, and to note that we have created the necessary legal and regulatory framework for the direct participation of the social partners in developing a sound social policy.

Nevertheless, the Government sees certain problems which impede achievement of the aims of guaranteeing the rights and freedom of activity of the trade unions and employers' organizations. First of all, we need a legislative solution to the problem of legal registration of trade unions and employers' organizations, in accordance with ILO Conventions. In light of the current state of social dialogue in Ukraine, we are optimistic that this problem will be resolved very soon.

In close cooperation with the social partners, the Government is applying its efforts to raising the living standards of the population, and creating opportunities for decent work and jobs. Incomes have increased. The average wage is now 2.7 times higher than the minimum subsistence level.

The minimum wage now amounts to 90 per cent (and next year will be 100 per cent) of the basic minimum subsistence level for workers. We have increased our help to families and children. By comparison with last year, we have increased by more than 40 per cent the benefit paid for the birth of a first child (US\$2,500) by three times for a second child (US\$5,000), and six times for the third child and subsequent children (US\$10,000).

We have also increased child benefit for large families and more than 240,000 disabled children have received special assistance. New steps have been taken with regard to pension reform. The wage substitution coefficient was already 46 per cent, which is more than is required by the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). Ukraine has ratified 63 Conventions, including 20 since it became independent.

With regard to our "road map", we have, together with the ILO, analysed national social security legislation with regard to its conformity with the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 (No. 121), the Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967 (No. 128), the Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention, 1969 (No. 130), and the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168).

In March this year Ukraine ratified another Convention – the Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1979 (No. 153). A general agreement with the social partners, which was signed this year, provides for the possibility of ratifying a number of other ILO Conventions, including the Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139), the Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979 (No. 152), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), and the Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162).

With the conclusion of a Memorandum between the Ministry of Labour and the ILO, on the new programme for decent work 2008–11, we have made a major contribution to future collaboration.

We are grateful to the ILO for its broad technical assistance in the framework of this programme, in resolving important problems concerning labour market developments and industrial relations, and for its help in the preparation of a draft labour code which was adopted by the Supreme Council of Ukraine in May this year.

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*Mr ANDERSON (Employer, Australia)*

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Australian employers, and our country as a whole, have had a constructive participation in multilateral forums, including the ILO, over many decades. As a recently appointed leader of Australia's employers, I can indicate that that four-decade record of service will continue.

This institution, like all institutions, is not without its weaknesses, but certainly, also, not without its achievements.

The private sector requires free and stable societies in order to flourish. The ILO is a world forum where we seek that freedom and that social cohesion. When modernizing, organizations need to seek a renewed vigour, embrace changed paradigms and build new relationships, but keep their values intact. That is the approach Australian employers are taking, and it is also an approach that reflects the modernization work of the ILO.

Our most enduring economic value as employers is support for, and a belief in, markets and private-sector entrepreneurship and investment. Indeed, Australia has been a beneficiary of globalization, not because globalization sought us out, but because we ultimately came through it by restructuring the way we do business.

However, globalization does have its unequal impacts, as the Director-General has advised. Social policy plays a role in evening out those bumps. For developing countries and vulnerable economies, some of which are our near neighbours in the Pacific, the challenges are enormous, and Australia, including employers, must play its part in helping the economic transformation and transition of those communities. It is through employment and quality jobs that people are lifted out of poverty and disad-

vantage. Employment provides hope; it sustains families; it minimizes the risk of extremism taking hold and it gives order to communities. Productive employment is the glue that not only binds societies to economies, but also economies to their societies. These principles are foundation stones that need to be visibly rooted in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

It is apparent that the world economy faces some tougher economic times ahead. That means tougher times for our societies. An important leadership role for the ILO in those difficult periods is to give a high profile to social policy, but to also ensure that we do not respond to tougher conditions by expecting the State alone to generate the necessary jobs.

There are four complementary social values that I wish to highlight and espouse as a leader of Australia's employers. These are an economically responsible social safety net; a proper role for government; the work of the corporate sector as part of society; and freedom of association.

None of these values is inconsistent with the fundamental principles of market economies and market freedom in an industrialized economy. Properly applied, they are complementary values, not just here, but in my home country as well. These values line up with the values of employers' organizations from the many nations here at the ILO, and in the work of the Organization itself.

Too frequently we, as Australian employers, have undertaken work in each of these social policy areas, but only communicated an economic message. This needs to change. I am determined, as a leader of Australian employers, that our voice on behalf of Australian business should be more rounded, with our economic message in support of open markets and entrepreneurship framed by the relationships that business organizations and employers have with their governments, their communities and their employees. In other words, we see business and business organizations as integral to Australian society, not just part of its economy. Indeed, that is a principle we see applied globally.

Our Asia-Pacific region needs more direct focus by the ILO. It is an area where there are significant needs. A number of our economies in the Asia-Pacific region are struggling in their transition from an old economy into the global world. Many local labour forces require reskilling. I welcome the fact that the new employer specialists have now been appointed to regional and subregional offices in the Asia-Pacific, but this has taken a long time.

I urge the ILO to work in a more integrated way with its key stakeholders and agencies to find practical solutions in these regions of need and I offer, on behalf of Australian employers, our cooperation and assistance.

Finally, I return to my theme of globalization – acknowledging the debate in many nations, including my country, about labour migration. The principles of this Organization recognize that capital is mobile and that labour too is mobile. They speak against closed borders and the internalization of labour markets, in favour of their internationalization.

As leaders in our communities, I urge all of us to contribute to a deeper public debate about the social value of orderly migration programmes based on national circumstances, particularly in areas of need. With these remarks, I welcome the Report of the Director-General and I look forward to the ILO

adopting a strong embrace of private sector values as part of its decent work programme.

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Ms KNUPPERT (*Worker, Denmark*)

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I would like to start by congratulating the ILO on the anniversary of the adoption of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, both representing core ILO values. The right to organize and to bargain collectively are enabling rights that make it possible to promote democracy, and strengthen labour markets, good governance and decent working conditions, fundamental human rights and values which are, regrettably, not respected all over the world.

I also congratulate the Director-General on his Report for this Conference. It is impressive how the ILO has promoted international understanding of the Decent Work Agenda. This has ensured that employment and workers' rights have become more central to the work of organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – but there is still a lot that has to be done before these organizations fully embrace the Decent Work Agenda.

We, therefore, support the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization which will be put forward by the Committee on Strengthening the ILO's Capacity and recommend that it be adopted by the Conference.

We have closely studied the report on Burma with great interest and let me express our sincere appreciation of the work of the ILO Liaison Officer and his team. But it is important to remember that labour activists remain imprisoned in Burma, that forced labour, including the recruitment of child soldiers, are taking place and that freedom of association, among others, are still issues that have to be dealt with.

The situation in Burma is not acceptable and we therefore strongly support the work of the ILO and the Burmese people.

We are pleased that the serious violations of trade union rights in Colombia have been addressed by the Committee on the Application of Standards, along with many other cases including the current violations in Zimbabwe. We fully agree with the Committee's conclusions with regard to Zimbabwe, which will be presented later this week.

One of the many other very important discussions during this ILO Conference is related to the General Survey on the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94), and the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Recommendation, 1949 (No. 84). I am happy to announce that the Danish trade unions fully support the position of the Danish Government and our local public employers on this issue. Convention No. 94 is the only global instrument that ensures that public contracts do not exert downward pressure on wages and working conditions. We therefore fully agree with the recommendations that these instruments must be promoted actively by the Office, both with a view to securing additional ratifications and a better implementation of the provisions of the Convention at the national level in order to secure a social dimension of globalization.

The Committee on Skills deals with a very important issue. It is vital for me to underline that the aim of improving workers' skills should not only be to improve productivity but also to ensure decent work for all workers. It is therefore essential that vocational training and the improvement of workers'

skills is seen as an integrated element of the social dialogue, collective bargaining and tripartite agreements which are also fundamental elements of state security.

I also applaud the outcome of the very timely debate on poverty reduction through the promotion of decent work in rural areas. As we speak, millions of the world's poorest people in rural areas search for ways to resist the devastating effects of the food crisis and the scarcity of decent work. The proposed commitment of the ILO to facilitate the elaboration of Decent Work Country Programmes with rural focus deserves our full support. Equally, the contribution to an informed discussion within the UN on the social and employment impact of food prices is important. We therefore recommend the adoption of the proposed conclusions and resolutions and the allocation by the Governing Body of sufficient resources to live up to this commitment.

Let me conclude by stressing that we believe that today the ILO is at the forefront when it comes to promoting and ensuring decent work and decent living conditions for millions of people all over the world.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr LUPI (Government, Brazil)*

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The march of economic globalization has brought with it various social and labour effects. While on the one hand, it fosters job opportunities, thanks to the increase in production and trade, on the other hand, it has led to job losses, casualization of work and worsening of poverty. In addressing this problem, the ILO argues decent and productive work can turn globalization into a fairer, more sustainable process from an economic, social and environmental point of view. A timely and appropriate solution to this challenge can be found in the implementation of a Global Agenda for Decent Work and, indeed, the member States are implementing this agenda through national decent work plans aimed at overcoming poverty and social and economic imbalances.

In 2003, within these very walls, the Brazilian Government signed an ILO Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the National Agenda for Decent Work in my country. Since then, we have worked very hard to achieve this in partnership with the employers' and workers' representatives.

As to the Decent Work Agenda for the Hemisphere, Brazil works in close cooperation with the MERCOSUR countries and the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML). We also whole-heartedly support the South-South Cooperation Initiative to Combat Child Labour, signed by Brazil and the ILO in December 2007 as part of the IPEC programme.

This year the Brazilian Government submitted the texts of the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), to the National Congress with President Lula's recommendation that they be ratified.

Through enacting this law, Brazil has formalized its legal recognition of the central trade union organizations set up in the 1980s, which are only now getting due recognition of their role as the legitimate representatives of the general interests of the Brazilian working class. These actions represent President Lula and his Government's commitment

to strengthening social dialogue and the democratization of labour relations in our country.

As regards combating discrimination and the promotion of equality, this year the Ministry of Labour and Employment set up an Equal Opportunities Commission, which deals with equality of gender, race, ethnic group, persons with disabilities and fights discrimination. It will be made up by people responsible for affirmative action directed at these public.

In the fight against forced labour, the Mobile Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, set up in 1995 under the National Programme for the Eradication of Forced Labour, has already rescued more than 28,000 workers from situations akin to slavery. In 2008, by May, over 1,100 workers had been freed, the great majority of whom were semi-illiterate. These workers are now given the support they need to return home, as well as access to unemployment benefit and vocational training, that is to say, a range of support measures aimed at easing the workers' transition as they seek decent work opportunities.

One of the main concerns of the international community and Brazilian society in this regard is linked to working conditions in the sugar/alcohol sector and the issue of food production. It should be pointed out that Brazil has 383 million hectares of arable land, while seven million hectares of land are planted with sugar cane, representing two per cent of the total area of arable land. Brazil still has 91 million hectares available for agriculture, that is to say 24 per cent of the total arable area. The cultivation of sugar cane to produce ethanol involves the use of only 3.4 million hectares, 1 per cent of the arable land. Bio-diesel is produced on only 2.2 million hectares, in other words 0.6 per cent of the arable area. The energy derived is 8.3 times greater than the energy consumed in the productive process. This is thanks to the simplicity of the Brazilian sugar cane process which allows for a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of between 87 and 96 per cent compared with petrol emissions. Here, I would like to stress the importance of eliminating subsidies for agricultural production in developed countries, these being the main reason behind the current "food crisis".

Apart from our ongoing labour inspections regarding working conditions, the Brazilian Government has, since September 2002, been discussing a proposal for a National Protocol for Working Conditions in the Sugar Cane Sector as a first step towards the future negotiation of a national Collective Labour Agreement. The aim is to develop short and medium-term actions for the sponsorship and promotion of good working conditions and the preservation of the environment where sugar cane harvesting is concerned throughout the country.

I am delighted to reassert the fact that the eradication of child labour is a top priority for all our regional labour inspectorates and forms an integral part of their annual guidelines. The Brazilian Government believes the solution lies in education and, therefore, a child's place is in school. Children should both play and study.

Brazil has experienced record levels of job creation in the period 2003-07, against a backdrop of macroeconomic, legal and institutional stability. About 8,088,728 private and public sector jobs were created, according to Ministry of Labour and Employment records. In 2008, jobs are being created at

an even faster rate, 848,962 by April. This is the highest ever to be recorded in our General Employment and Unemployment Register.

The minimum wage in 2003 was the equivalent of US\$82.67. It now stands at US\$253.36, thanks to the effort of President Lula's Government.

Training young people is a priority for our Government. Where the employment of young people is concerned, we recently launched the National Programme for Youth Inclusion (Projovent). The aim of the programme is to help 3.5 million young people between 18 and 29 years old, between 2008–10.

We are also running Social Youth Partnerships. The aim here is to allow 18–29 years olds from low-income backgrounds and in situations of risk and social vulnerability to obtain professional qualifications. By 2008, we hope to have 320,000 qualified young people, with at least 30 per cent in work.

One such Social Youth Partnership in Xingu, which works with indigenous peoples, should have trained 1000 youths by December 2008.

Brazil fully intends to contribute towards the elimination of poverty and hunger.

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*Original Turkish: Mr ÇELİK (Minister for Labour and Social Security, Turkey)*

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The main issues discussed here at the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference have featured permanently on the labour agenda of my country ever since last year's session of the Conference.

In the course of the past year, we have either initiated or put into practice a number of legislative reform efforts in the fields of social security, the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the labour market, vocational training and industrial relations.

While we have been accomplishing these tasks, the standards enshrined in the International Labour Organization's Conventions and set out in the documents of the European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe have always been reference points which have guided us. A major and comprehensive draft bill which will bring our legislation on the right to organize and the right to collective bargaining into line with ILO standards, which was prepared together with the social partners, was submitted for approval to the Turkish Parliament last month and has now been endorsed by a specialized Parliamentary commission and has been placed on the agenda of the General Assembly of the Turkish Parliament. These legislative proposals will eliminate obstacles to the right to organize and will prove a starting point for a new and more liberalistic period in Turkey.

Our Government is working hard to promote growth and the development of human resources. The reform package, which is related to the employment market, was initiated last May and in this reform package the following new regulations have been put forward: to reduce the administrative and financial burden on employers; to reduce the tax burden on labour costs; and, in particular, to provide incentives to encourage employment of women, young people and the disabled. Moreover, by allocating resources to vocational training services, we see to it that qualified labour forces are trained in the fields needed by employers. In this regard, the Turkish Employment Organization, the Ministry of Education, the Vocational Qualification Agency, the Provincial Employment Boards, workers' and

employers' confederations and vocational institutes, as well as the Ministry, have put in place a series of programmes and projects to increase the employability of the labour force trained in the fields needed.

The rate of employment among women university graduates stands at 70 per cent, which shows the significant contribution education is making in particular to female employment. We are keenly aware of this fact and therefore attach particular importance to the education of children and young girls.

On the one hand, our ambition is to increase employment and, on the other hand, we strive also to improve working conditions and to ensure adequate protection of workers through measures taken within the context of the decent work principles. For example, protective measures relating to health and safety at work are also part of this employment package. The social security reforms carried out this year are also in line with our objective to implement the Decent Work Agenda.

I am happy to say that there is close cooperation between Turkey and the ILO on various projects. But there are also some subjects, some areas, where we consider that the ILO could play a more active role. The changes in our countries' economies and the new demographic trends are such that the demand for foreign labour forces is increasing in many of the industrialized countries and return migration has been on the agenda of many countries in recent years. There are limitations in the field of the social rights of migrants and strict rules against the free movement of the labour force. We are concerned by new approaches as regards migration policy, which include giving fewer rights to migrants compared to the existing policies. We believe that new migration policies should not stray from the current approach. We would like to see the ILO play a more active role in protecting the rights of migrant workers and also to give guidance to both countries of origin and countries of destination.

We applied to host the 19th World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Turkey, which is the most significant international initiative in the field of occupational health and safety. It is organized every three years by the International Labour Organization and the International Social Security Association (ISSA).

We hope to be able to welcome you in Istanbul, in Turkey, on the occasion of the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in 2011.

I am confident that this session of the International Labour Conference, to which we as a country attach the greatest importance, will bear fruitful results.

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*Ms CHAO (Secretary of Labor, United States)*

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First, let me touch on the touchstone issue of freedom of association. It is a fundamental principle of democracy that individuals should have the right to vote their conscience, privately, free from the threat of reprisal. This principle, which protects the integrity of national elections, is also critical in the workplace, where key economic decisions are made. The United States believes that the private ballot is an important tool for protecting workers, especially when making the decision about whether or not to join a union. Only through a private ballot can workers be assured that they will not be subject to violence or intimidation. The United States recognizes that the laws regarding the use of the pri-

vate ballot in the workplace vary from country to country, but we hope that the ILO will explore and encourage the use of this important tool to strengthen national commitments to freedom of association for workers.

Now let me turn to another important issue for workers, which is the impact of the worldwide economy and the availability of decent work. While many developed countries are currently experiencing economic challenges, the United States does not agree with the assessment of those challenges as laid out in the current Report of the Director-General, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*. It suggests that a confluence of events has placed us in a situation not seen since the Great Depression. This comparison is erroneous and inappropriate. At the height of the Depression, the US workforce was about 58 million workers and one quarter, or 25 per cent, of the entire US workforce was unemployed. Today the American workforce numbers about 153 million workers and the unemployment rate is 5.5 per cent, which is lower than the average of 5.7 per cent during the 1990s. In the interim, therefore, the United States has created nearly 100 million jobs. Over the four key years of the Depression, US GDP growth fell by about one half. Today, GDP growth in the United States is still positive. Moreover, the economic trajectories of many developing countries today have improved significantly: 2007 was the fifth consecutive year in which growth in developing countries exceeded 6 per cent, a record never previously accomplished. The IMF expects this growth to continue in 2008 at a rate of 6.7 per cent and then continue beyond that to 2013. While growth in developed countries has had an impact on the developing world, in the long run, internal economic policies within the developing countries are ultimately more important. Without internal policies that create a climate for growth and job creation, a country will never develop, regardless of the external environment. As noted by the IMF, the developing countries that have adopted free market reforms and opened themselves up to trade, are clearly performing the best and delivering the most for workers. Indeed, if there is a comparison to be made between the severe economic contractions of the 1930s and today, it is in the area of trade, which is not mentioned in the Report. Then, as now, protectionist sentiments are raising that could cause irreparable harm and damage to workers if implemented.

What can labour ministers do to help workers thrive in today's global environment? In a joint 2007 paper on trade and employment, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the ILO concluded that modern economies need to constantly reallocate resources to respond to changing economic conditions. Labour ministers and ministries can support the adjustment process by trimming unnecessary regulations, allowing workers and employers the flexibility to do what is best for them, and ensuring that workers have access to the education and training that they need to succeed in the worldwide economy.

Looking forward, the United States hopes that the ILO will continue to focus its core mission on building capacity in labour and employment ministries, especially in worker training, promoting flexible workforces that can cope with rapidly changing conditions, helping to ensure workplace protection and adherence to internationally recognized core

labour standards, and focusing on the economic policies that promote job creation. By focusing on its core mission and strengthening worker protection through the private ballot, the ILO can continue to ensure that its mission will remain relevant in the twenty-first century.

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Ms KOSOR (*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Family, Veterans Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, Croatia*)

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It is my special privilege to be able to personally greet this assembly on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Croatia and to express my pleasure that vital labour and social issues are considered at this event.

On this occasion, I would like to emphasize that, for the development of the economy, its growth, an increase in employment and an improvement in the standard of living and social security of the citizens, the cooperation of key social sectors – the Government, employers and trade unions – is of special importance.

The fundamental goal of the Republic of Croatia is full membership of the European Union as the core of stable peace, democratic freedom and economic growth. The Government of Croatia is convinced that the EU-accession process should be a transparent and open process with direct involvement, continued dialogue and consultation with representatives of trade unions and employers' associations, as well as with other civil society organizations. Social dialogue and partnership have proven, in our conditions, to be the most effective methods of finding joint solutions and formulating measures which will open the prospects of development, employment, social security and promote social inclusion, social justice and solidarity. It is natural that social partners should have different interests, but there is no social development and growth without the acknowledgement of these differences and without acknowledging the necessity of joint work in building a society to the standards of each member of the community.

The Croatian Government has accepted trade unions and employers' associations as equal and precious partners in developing new legislation and measures and in formulating new public policies and strategic documents. Having a well-formulated consulting process is a winning strategy for each of the social partners, but also for all of them together. During the past, appropriate preconditions for the successful functioning of social dialogue have been met. Independent workers' and employers' organizations have been founded, with technical capacities for participation in social dialogue. There is a political will and inclination shown by all parties for active participation in this social dialogue. The right of free association and collective bargaining has been achieved and appropriate institutional support to the development of social dialogue has been ensured.

The protection of the dignity of work and workers with the appropriate legal framework, efficient protection and monitoring, the creation of conditions for the correct functioning of the legal state institutions, stable macroeconomic conditions, incentive-based employment measures, active family and social policy and balanced development of all parts of the country, as well as the implementation of a series of structural reform, are priority areas for the joint activities of the Government, employers and trade unions in the Republic of Croatia.

The Economic and Social Council, with its activities, contributes significantly to the successful implementation of the fundamental economic and social reforms, as well as to the processes of negotiations between the Republic of Croatia and the European Union. In cooperating within the Economic and Social Council and with high-quality social dialogue, with invested efforts by all three social partners, we have achieved a model of social balance and accomplished a low level of social conflict and a high level of social peace, thus creating the way and foundation for further developing economic and social policies.

The established comprehensive institutional framework for social dialogue in the Republic of Croatia is very good and provides a wide open space for the social partners to consult on all relevant economic and social issues. We have implemented a Croatian model of social partnership that has strong national and local dimensions, from the workplace to different bodies at the national level.

I can confirm with pleasure that the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Croatia has established itself entirely as a central subject of tripartism in the field of economic and social issues, leading a consolidated economic and social policy and incentives for the conclusion and implementation of collective agreements and their accordance with the measures of economic, social and development policies, as well as in promoting the peaceful solution of labour disputes.

In politically and economically stable countries like Croatia, the developed labour relations and various forms of worker participation in decision-making are factors of productivity growth and create a wide range of possibilities in negotiating rights and obligations between workers' and employers' associations.

Democracy in the work environment is not only desirable, it also represents the expression of social fairness in a democratic world. In the Republic of Croatia, we have recognized the importance of developing industrial democracy and, in labour legislation, we have ensured the right of participation in decision-making by workers' representatives, not only in protection of employers' rights, but also in shaping industrial relations at the workplace, which is of special significance for the balance between work and capital.

In addition to the national Economic and Social Council, in the Republic of Croatia, social dialogue is also conducted in a significant manner at the local level, as well as through tripartite councils and other bodies in which the representatives of social partners jointly manage pension and health insurance systems, employment, social security and welfare, health protection and safety at work and rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

In the forthcoming period, the employers' and trade union associations have announced more intensive activities.

By this tripartite agreement we aim to open a new chapter in the social partners' relationship development to strengthen the role of employers and trade unions and to channel energies towards the realization of the crucial objectives of Croatian society, one of which is further betterment for workers, employers and all the citizens of Croatia.

Finally, I wish to underline that, aware of these new challenges, the Croatian Government, employers and trade unions will continue with even more

intensity to further develop and advance social dialogue and partnership in all areas, fully aware of their role in and responsibility for achieving economic and social development.

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*Original Spanish: Mr MARTINEZ (Worker, Argentina)*

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On behalf of the women and men workers of Argentina, I congratulate the President for his appointment and the Director-General for the Report that he has submitted.

The Conference confirmed the most authentic values of the ILO, namely freedom, equality and dignity. The Report bears witness to decent work in practice. Decent Work Country Programmes are instruments to develop concrete actions adapted to the realities of each country and help in planning the tasks which lie ahead. My country, after the 2001 crisis, drew up its first plan and was successful with respect to the recovery of employment, but as of the year 2003, through an economic and productive model which set aside neo-liberal policies, we achieved a level of growth with social inclusion, putting into practice the Decent Work Country Programme. All the dimensions of decent work have been discussed in the various committees. The strengthening of the ILO's capacity will serve to evaluate the strategic objectives. The skills to improve productivity, growth and employment are fundamental tools in order to be included in the labour world, and that is why we place emphasis on training, certification and improved skills, which must be part of productivity in order to generate sustainable relationships between work and the worker.

We must build a comprehensive decent work strategy in the rural sector; thus we will improve the working conditions of the workers and enable countries to experience favourable growth for the most hard-hit sectors.

It is essential to address the issue of updating the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949, (No. 94), so that within the framework of fair competition among enterprises, it is possible to ensure fair conditions for workers.

The ILO and the trade union movement are celebrating 40 years of Convention No. 87 – no doubt this was the very *raison d'être* of the workers throughout the world who are organized without any ideological or political restriction.

My country is facing challenges to achieving an inclusive model where everyone can play a role. Social dialogue, tripartism and collective bargaining are the instruments which enable a solution for the demands of workers and of society. More than 1,000 collective agreements have been signed every year with broad coverage, which is a true expression of how we are achieving a better distribution of income. In the face of the tasks ahead, we must strengthen efforts in the struggle against informal labour, establish a culture of prevention and eliminate unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. In the social crisis facing my country now, there are those who are in favour of maintaining the model of concentration. On the other hand, we have the firm decision of the vast majority of the people, who are defending a model of redistribution of wealth to the most unprotected sectors of society.

I feel that a country of solidarity and justice needs social dialogue and institutional participation with a view to discussing and forging its political policies and strategies. That is why we propose the creation

of an Economic and Social Development Council to agree on long-term state policies promoting inclusion and development for the future of Argentina.

The setting up of the new Trade Union Congress of the Americas is an important and fundamental reality, strengthening the trade union movement in its efforts to protect the rights of the workers of our continent.

Our people are pressing for more health, education, social security and equal opportunities and for the eradication of child labour and respect for human rights. That is why, along with the new progressive governments, we will continue to struggle against neo-liberal policies which deal hard blows to our countries and strengthen democratic institutions and the active participation of the trade union movement. For this, we need socially responsible employers. In the process of integration, minimum wages have to be guaranteed which must be compatible with the dignity of all workers, taking systemic productivity as a reference, so as to do away with inequality and acquire social equity. I am sure that we will face the globalized world with greater power, and we will exchange today's sadness for the happiness of a fair society. A lot of work lies ahead; the workers are the key players and the unions are their voice and their strength.

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*Original Portuguese: Ms TAIPO (Minister of Labour, Mozambique)*

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I am glad to see that the Mozambique Government's strategies and programmes are in line with the ILO's vision as set out in the Reports submitted to this session.

Against this background, the strategy for improving the business environment in Mozambique deserves special attention as a way of attracting increasing amounts of national and international investment.

The Government, in partnership with civil society, has been adopting measures to cut red tape in order to foster business and, hence, to create more jobs.

At a time when sub-Saharan Africa is recording alarming levels of poverty and almost 80 per cent of the population have an income below US\$2. We must take urgent action to raise general awareness in order to promote Decent Work. In this way we will avoid outbreaks to social conflicts which could well degenerate into riots and violence.

One of the foundations of the life cycle principle, referred to by the Director-General, is social protection. With this in mind, we opted for a more inclusive social protection which goes further than compulsory social security; we introduced basic and supplementary social security.

These are social measures, the practical application of which will extend coverage to more beneficiaries, thus bringing about a gradual improvement in worker protection and the conditions of citizens in general.

Mozambique is counting on the implementation of the Employment and Vocational Training Strategy. We are therefore calling upon our international cooperation partners to adjust their investment strategies, with a view to accommodating national interests in the struggle against poverty and the creation, not only of jobs, but of decent jobs, which value human beings.

We are delighted with the discussions held here and we hope that they will lead to the adoption of a new Declaration on Strengthening the ILO's Capac-

ity. This is the moment for the ILO to reaffirm its universal values of the fight for the social well-being of workers.

More than ever, at a time when the world is highly inter-dependent, the ILO should be in the vanguard, and this is why we welcome the deliberations of this 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. This is a golden opportunity for each and every one of our States to reflect upon ways and means of applying the principles contained in this fundamental instrument for safeguarding human rights.

My Government attaches the utmost importance to compliance with these international instruments relative to protecting all migrant workers, including the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) of the ILO on migrant workers.

We would encourage the ILO to pursue its efforts to instil a culture and spirit of the Decent Work Agenda in all and sundry. All workers, wherever they may be, deserve respect, dignity and decent treatment.

Finally, allow me, Mr President, to publicly state our confidence in Ambassador Juan Somavia and in his stewardship of the destiny of our Organization.

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*Mr STEYNE (Worker, United Kingdom)*

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The Trades Union Congress (TUC) believes the new ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization will promote an enhanced strategic vision for the ILO and will help turn an anarchic, unjust and unsustainable globalization into a vehicle for decent work, education and peace for all.

We all desire a more efficient ILO, but though the new Declaration signals clearer focus, we reject demands for a cheaper ILO from rich countries that are the main beneficiaries of globalization, or that would be, if they made the rich and the super rich pay their fair share of taxes. Failure to promote equity at home undermines global equity. Despite the search for policy coherence, the current crisis is driven by limitless greed and the failure of the international community, and of member States, to regulate the global economy and financial markets.

The new Declaration reflects the challenge of meeting exponentially increasing demands for ILO standards and services. We welcome the Regular Budget Supplementary Account, which strengthens tripartite governance, but the regular budget must grow, not shrink.

More efficiency, yes, but results-based management must not mean a target-led strategy of picking only the low fruit. Seemingly intractable problems of gross and interwoven violations of fundamental rights at work must be resolved if the keystones of decent work and a just globalization are to be laid. Freedom of association and collective bargaining, the Declaration makes clear, are *primus inter pares*, one of four indivisible and mutually reinforcing strategic objectives and enabling rights on which all else rests.

The new Declaration indicates new openness, a chance for the ILO to work more effectively with multinationals who hold the reins of economic power. The new MNE helpdesk is an example and

we repeat our willingness for social partnership with multinationals that respect trade union rights and promote ILO standards in global supply chains. Similarly, we are also working with civil-society allies that respect the difference between advocacy and representativity. That understanding cements the growing reinvigoration of the Global March against Child Labour, the development of the Global Alliance against Forced Labour and the Global Campaign for Education.

As relevant now as in 1919, 1944 or 1998, the new Declaration restates the principles that poverty anywhere constitutes a threat to prosperity everywhere, and that lasting peace can only be built on a foundation of enduring social justice.

Those truths lie at the heart of the TUC's bilateral solidarity priorities: countries in which violence against trade unions – including state and state sponsored violence – hinders social dialogue, and democratic, social and economic development.

In Palestine, the violence of the illegal occupation and of Hamas has hindered the search for peace. The TUC repeats: seize the chance for progress towards two free, independent and viable states. End the occupation. Do not expand illegal colonies, remove them. Tear down the wall. Remove the checkpoints. Stop collective punishment. To the Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) we say, attend the Bethlehem and London investment conferences, invest for peace in Palestine, Israel and the entire region.

In Colombia, impunity still reigns. True social dialogue and mature industrial relations remain a dream for democratic, peace-loving trade unionists. We say to the Government of Columbia the scandal of “parapolítica” may be sending your parliamentarians to jail, but your treaty obligations to the ILO remain. Fulfil those and those of the tripartite agreement. To member States we say, support a strengthened ILO office in Bogotá. To employers, Colombian and global, we say, effective social dialogue is the best example of peaceful conflict resolution. Stop turning your backs on us, reassess your desire for unlimited wealth and embrace us as partners for peace and equity.

In Iraq, we say to the occupation forces, stop harassing trade unionists in your desire to privatize and expatriate Iraq's oil wealth. To the Government of Iraq we say, you know we are actively supporting the rebirth of free trade unionism in Iraq. Recognize us as partners for peace, equity and democracy and let us pursue trade union activities in full freedom.

In Zimbabwe, firstly we call on all constituents, to support the Committee on the Application of Standards' call for a commission of inquiry. Secondly, though the regime may deny food and seize citizens' identity documents so that they cannot vote, and though it uses the Public Order and Security Act to prevent trade union activity, the working people of Zimbabwe have spoken. True, Zimbabwe has no oil, but its peace-loving people demand their freedom. They need your support now.

And finally, Burma, a junta pariah among pariahs. In the wake of cyclone Nargis, the brutal kleptocracy lines its pockets by exporting Burmese rice and by selling it to the Red Cross to feed the starving flood victims. The ILO must strengthen its presence; relief aid must get through, but investment there benefits the generals. Multinationals must heed the call from trade unions, the democracy mo-

vement and the ILO resolution of 2000 and withdraw. If you stay, so will the generals.

The clarion of 1919 in Versailles and 1944 in Philadelphia still calls for us. But so does Martin Luther King Jr's address at the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963: “From every mountainside, let freedom ring!” Decent work and decent life for all!

*(Ms Diallo takes the Chair.)*

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*Original Azeri: Mr RAHIMOV (Government, Azerbaijan)*

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This Conference confirms that the action of the ILO is not limited to its sphere of competence, but serves the ideals of social equality in the world.

This Report is particularly important and relevant because 2008 is the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The problems we are dealing with at this Conference have to do with the implementation of the Declaration in such a way as to ensure that human development is more just and more sustainable. They relate to issues that we are at the forefront of debate both nationally and internationally.

We too are concerned with reaching these goals. The creation of an effective system of social and labour relations based on social dialogue has enabled us to make a qualitative leap forward in terms of social partnership.

Recent years have seen an increase in the conclusion of collective agreements at every level.

Today in Azerbaijan we have an efficient system of sectoral bodies and trade union federations which are, as they must be, founded on a sound legislative basis. But this is no time for complacency; we know that there is still much to do. In this we see the ILO as the foremost partner.

The stable growth rates that we have enjoyed in recent years has helped us promote more sustainable development, as well as conditions that are conducive to a better standard of living.

The Government of Azerbaijan supports the ILO's major programmes, which are the very basis of the fundamental principles and rights at work whose anniversary we are celebrating this year.

One of the most important aspects of our development is the fact that all the social partners agree on the goal of decent work. Social dialogue creates the right environment for resolving the problems that arise in the social and labour fields.

The growth of our GDP has made it possible to create new jobs and to combat poverty and unemployment. According to our statistics office, between 2003 and 1 April 2008, more than 670,000 were created. This led to a reduction in the number of people living in poverty from 44 per cent to 16 per cent of the population.

We are also introducing further reforms in terms of social welfare, social security, targeted social assistance and employment creation. We also need to make better use of our human resources, and the implementation of the fundamental principles and rights at work is a major feature of our policy in this area.

With the real social and economic situation and the experience of other countries in mind, we are revising the Labour Code of our country.

Equally important is the adoption of new standards in our labour relations and we are starting from the principle that rights of the parties laid

down in the Declaration must be embodied in the new legislation, as must the protection of labour.

Our Government is adopting a large number of enforcement measures to ensure that the new legislation on rights at work is properly observed. This has to go hand in hand with preventive measures aimed at the fair protection of labour, the elimination of child labour and the development of social dialogue.

The new standards and requirements as regards occupational safety and health must be brought into line with international standards.

In recent years, thanks to our successful reforms, we have greatly enhanced the role of labour inspection as a means not just of enforcing legislation but also of protecting the workers' interests.

At the same time we are improving the level of training of labour inspectors. International competition on the labour market is such that our social welfare standards likewise need to be updated, and we are currently implementing a programme for the years 2007 to 2010 that focuses on the development of manpower and human resources.

We would like once again to express our gratitude to you for organizing this session of the Conference and trust that we shall rapidly be able to implement the fundamental principle and rights at work. We hope that all of us here are absolutely convinced that we can attain these objectives for the greater social progress of mankind.

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Mr MALLARD (*Minister of Labour, New Zealand*)

The Director-General's Report is a useful review of the issues and opportunities that lie ahead as we highlight the Decent Work Agenda. New Zealand does not believe there needs to be a trade-off between trade, sustainable and equitable growth, employment and social development. In fact they can be reinforcing.

This Conference has given us some practical tools for this through the Committee work undertaken to date. Here, we have seen detailed discussion on the need to promote employment in the rural sector, skills development, productivity and growth, and the ILO's capacity to deliver the Decent Work Agenda itself.

New Zealand strongly supports moves to revitalize the rural economy, to add value and assist work transitions in that sector; for us, the barriers to trade and food, and the subsidies to move away from food to biofuel production, cause not only starvation but a reduction of living standards in both developing and in developed countries.

Coupled with this is the issue of skills and productivity. We need to recognize the need to have a world-performing labour market at all levels, given the diverse and changing needs of industries, regions and people. Changes in labour markets are inevitable. It is the preparation for, and management of, these changes, that is vital.

We have therefore approached the issues of employment and skills development for a broad range of policies and measures. They range from basic foundation skills education initiatives through to those that expand industry training. All are linked to the economy's demand for skills and are supported by other measures to make the most of this investment.

Our "Better Work, Working Better" strategy outlines how the labour market and employment are important links between New Zealand's social and

economic outcomes. Through it, we seek to promote high-quality employment to drive sustainable economic growth and opportunities for all New Zealanders.

We are also developing a "Unified Skills" strategy focused on lifting productivity through developing new skills and using the skills we have to transform work and workplaces.

A key feature of these initiatives is a commitment to social partnership and the use of a strong dynamic tripartite system to promote meaningful engagement by all stakeholders.

New Zealand has a strong interest in seeing the ILO deliver high-quality, cost-effective services that are responsive to the needs of its constituents, particularly those in the Pacific region. New Zealand is willing to assist with this work. We see the implementation of the field structure review as a key element in ensuring a coordinated and effective ILO presence in the regions where needs are great, but the means of satisfying them are often limited. We should also focus on innovative solutions, on virtual centres, on web-based methods of programme delivery over the next few years.

Finally, there is the issue of employment standards. We note the Director-General's call for full ratification of core ILO labour standards Conventions by 2015. This is an ambitious goal. As the Director-General notes, we should not lose sight of the fact that ratification itself does not guarantee that the employment rights are actually observed. New Zealand will not ratify Conventions that it cannot realistically implement. We do note that there seems to be a variety of approaches by countries to this question. By ensuring there is sufficient capacity and will amongst States to fully implement the Conventions they have ratified should therefore be a priority.

To conclude, I wish to restate the New Zealand Government's commitment to working with and within the ILO as it moves to address the challenges and opportunities in developing decent work for sustainable development.

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

Mr Somavia's Report has placed an emphasis on the key strategic challenges which will determine the policy of the ILO until the middle of the next decade. The appropriate answer to all these challenges is decent work, a programme which is carried out successfully in many countries, and whose relevance is becoming increasingly obvious with each year.

We very much support the efforts of the ILO in working out Decent Work country strategies, and endorse the strengthening of the collaboration between the ILO, UN and other organizations.

The leadership of our country is setting ambitious goals in the development of the social sphere and labour relations. We will pay special attention to the efficiency of labour and sound social policy. We will adopt a blueprint paper for social and economic development of the Russian Federation.

By 2020, Russia should be among the five leading economic powers in terms of GDP, and over this period real disposable incomes of the population should increase two-fold, wages almost three-fold. At least 5–6 per cent of GDP will be devoted to education, compared to 4.6 per cent in 2006. Some

6–6.5 per cent will go on healthcare (3.9 per cent in 2006).

In order to achieve this, labour productivity has to double. This includes the key strategic aim of using skilled labour effectively and improving our human capital. In the medium term, 2008–11, wages should also increase, and this should make it possible to increase social wage guarantees, above all raising the minimum wage to the minimum subsistence level. These commitments are set out in the tripartite general agreement for 2008–10 between the trade unions, employers and the government.

Moreover, in the Labour Code, we have given the regions the right to set higher wages on the basis of tripartite agreements between the social partners. The growth of wages in the public sector will facilitate the introduction of new systems for payment of wages in the budget sectors – especially health and education. This will improve the quality of the public sector work and improve responsibility for the results, and create conditions for higher wages in the country as a whole. Social protection will be developed through targeted programmes for the poor, which will take families of workers and pensioners out of poverty. As the result of this, we believe we will resolve the problem of absolute poverty.

For the solution of demographic problems, in order to increase life expectancy, to increase the birth rate and regulate migration, and to improve the health of the population and improve the general demographic situation, we have adopted a concept paper on democratic policy for the Russian Federation for the period to 2025.

In implementing this paper concept, we have devised many measures to reduce mortality, the accident rate and occupational disease among the working population.

On a tripartite basis, we have a programme on improving working conditions and safety and health up to 2025. The main strategy of the programme is to protect the health of workers and ensure safety at work by introducing an occupational risk management system at every work place, and by creating economic incentives for employers to improve working conditions.

We are sure that by doing this, through joint efforts and effective tripartite collaboration, we will achieve our goals.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr BENEVIDES GADELHA (Employer, Brazil)*

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The Report of the Director-General addresses challenges and strategies for advancing the Decent Work Agenda against a backdrop of the new international financial crisis which is creating difficulties as yet not completely played out for the positive aspects of globalization, i.e. “opening new opportunities for economic growth through technology, investment and trade”. The Director-General also expresses concern about “the quality of economic growth and its impact on the environment as well as on social cohesion and stability, an impact that includes the growth of inequality”.

The Director-General states that the Decent Work Agenda is a productive vision grounded in the daily working life of women and men all over the world. It provides a practical balance between the role of the State, the innovative function of the market and the aspirations of individuals, families and communities.

Like the Director-General, we welcome the progress made over the past ten years and the policies adopted by many countries which are more focused on, and I quote, “fundamental principles and rights at work, opportunities for employment through inclusive markets (...), labour market institutions balancing the security of workers and flexibility of enterprises and broad social protection coverage”.

One cannot overemphasize the need to build an institutional environment which fosters policies and strategies designed to promote the development of sustainable enterprises, for they are indeed the main drivers of development, wealth, employment and decent work, as highlighted in the Report of the Committee on Sustainable Enterprises, submitted to the 96th Session of the International Labour Conference.

The Committee recognized that, in order to create and maintain sustainable enterprises, it is essential to have an enabling environment that includes, inter alia: peace and political stability; good governance; social dialogue; respect for universal human rights; well-designed macroeconomic policies and good management of the economy; proper regulations; the rule of law; an enabling legal environment; assured property rights; fair competition; access to financial services; physical infrastructure; information technology and communication, education, lifelong training; social justice; social inclusion and adequate social protection.

In this regard, the Report of the Director-General affirms that, “the axis, the centre of the transition towards a greener economy, will be the enterprise” and that this transition, however difficult and complex “can be made smoother and more stable through social dialogue and a strong partite approach.”

We believe then that the wise vision of the ILO, as regards the importance of decent work in building a sustainable global society, should be embraced and should go hand-in-hand with an equally robust promotion of the irreplaceable role of sustainable enterprises in achieving decent work for all.

In this regard, allow me to say a few words about my country, Brazil. The relations between two sides of industry unfortunately have not kept up with the deep structural change that has taken place. They are over-rigid and rooted in a pre-globalized environment, with outdated rules which lead to conflict, and they reduce the efficiency of collective bargaining. Despite the desire expressed by President Lula, when he first took office, to modernize labour relations in Brazil, labour reform simply did not happen. On the contrary, some government proposals, like calling for the ratification of the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), did not take into account the Director-General’s call for striking a balance between the security of workers and a flexible business administration.

We would hope that the national Decent Work Agenda contributes towards fostering modernization with the prudence necessary in the light of the great social responsibility involved, but at speed, because of the challenge posed by market liberalization and globalization, so that we can move to a truly productive economy.

Finally, I would like to confirm the keen interest of Brazilian employers in strengthening the ILO’s capacity to assist its Members in their efforts to achieve the goals of an era of globalization, a topic the Conference will once again be focusing on.

We agree that the ILO has a formidable mandate and we think that, as the current circumstances in the world enhance the relevance of the ILO, we should be able to provide an appropriate practical response to the changes its Members face. The Organization should consolidate its achievements thus far and should focus on results that can be adapted to a changing reality, and it should be willing to address challenges to itself.

I conclude by expressing our confidence that, as part of the changes involving the UN system as a whole, the ILO will fairly and faithfully uphold its lofty mandate, strongly rooted in tripartism and social dialogue and will renew and reinvent itself to support governments, workers and employers more effectively in the process of building sustainable development, and as my Minister said, may I conclude in saying Brazil too, wishes to move in this direction.

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*Original Russian: Mr SHMAKOV (Worker, Russian Federation)*

In his Report, the Director-General of the ILO raised the global problem of today, which is the influence of decent work upon the aims of sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequality, the application of labour law and development of all the strata of society. Analysis of these issues logically leads to the need to determine strategic response to the challenges of the future. This we find in the Report.

In our opinion, the Director-General is absolutely right when he says that the priority aim for 2015 is the forming of a system of evaluating progress, made in terms of decent work by the countries who are pursuing the goal. This is indispensable, because we have a long way to go and the main focus is the improvement of life everywhere. Although Russia does not yet have a DWCP, its ideology in many ways is a basis for resolving social, economic and legal problems. In Russia we have a structured system of social dialogue which, in spite of certain shortcomings and difficulties of an objective and subjective nature, makes it possible to achieve positive results. One of these results is the recent signature of a tripartite agreement in which we find developments in fields like wages, occupational health, pensions, etc. An appendix lists the ILO Conventions, which will be ratified during this period. Another positive result is the decision concerning the radical increase in the minimum wage in 2009 and the reaching of the minimum living standard, which the trade unions were seeking for a long time.

But there are other components of decent work which call for development. One of them is achieving the right to strike and the right to have fair collective bargaining. This year the ILO is marking the 60th anniversary of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and next year will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Russia ratified both of these a long time ago. Russian legislation is generally in line with the provisions of these Conventions. One exception, perhaps, is a rather complex problem related to strikes, and this has been spoken of at previous Conference sessions by Russian Workers' delegates.

What happens in practice? There are many cases when dishonest employers try to refuse recognition of trade unions and try to avoid collective bargain-

ing and even exercise pressure upon trade unions and militants.

This happens not only in Russian enterprises but in transnational corporations, the Russian branches of which were, in fact, the authors of social dialogue and collective bargaining. Examples are the Swedish company IKEA, Leroy Merlin of France, the American corporation Ford and Nestlé of Switzerland.

Five days ago, I took part in a forum of OECD where I wanted to meet the Vice-President of Nestlé, concerning the violation of international labour standards by their Russian branch. The conflict has been going on for more than half a year and the very justified demands of workers to receive higher wages fall on deaf ears on the part of the administration. In 2007, company profits increased by 17 per cent, largely through the success of the Russian branch. The Vice-President refused to meet me on an empty pretext, showing his disregard for the principles of dialogue and completely destroying the myth of Nestlé as a socially responsible organization.

I think that we are not reaching strategic goals when this happens and feel that only real social dialogue, based on social responsibility, with effective mechanism of control, will allow the ILO to implement the principle of decent work, sustainable development and the elimination of poverty and inequality. We intend to be part of that.

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*Original Spanish: Mr ANDRADE (Government, Chile)*

After two years in office, the Chilean President, Michelle Bachelet, promulgated an historic law which is designed to bring about an in-depth reform of the social welfare system. This was the main reform she promised in her manifesto and forms the cornerstone of an efficient and sound social welfare system, on the basis of which we want to transform Chile into a country which is not only economically modern and dynamic, but also fair and integrated. This is being developed in the context of a broader and more systematic process of social dialogue, to produce a public policy that has been developed in Chile. Despite the complexity of the issue, the draft law bringing about the reforms received almost unanimous support in Parliament in a very short time.

The ILO, through its specialists in Chile, offered great technical assistance to the Presidential Adviser who had a decisive influence in preparing the draft which was finally adopted. Therefore, I would like, on behalf of my Government, to congratulate the ILO both for its unselfish willingness to work with us on this important reform, something which is so necessary for our country, and also for the quality of the technical assistance provided. What we have now is an integrated system which is structured around individual capitalization with significant state support for the underprivileged.

The key is that today, in Chile, you are born with rights as regards pensions. We are not going to have this enormous gap between the privileged people who belong to the system and a significant group of people who are not, who are left to grow old in poverty. People over the age of 65, irrespective of whether they are men or women or of what they have achieved on the labour market, are guaranteed, as citizens and in recognition of their intrinsic human dignity, 100 per cent coverage as regards the right to a decent pension. This is a very important

achievement for Chile, where the welfare system was founded by the dictatorship solely on the basis of the market system.

It is precisely for this reason that our coalition not only defeated the dictator but the basic philosophy of the dictatorship, which is dehumanizing. In fact, this is why the people are supporting the parties for democracy who have received a majority vote over four successive presidential elections, making it the most successful political alliance in our history. In sum, the welfare reform is an enormous step forward for Chile. We are breaking with the radical individualism which was an obstacle to any institutionalized mechanism of solidarity.

Just as we have a lot of challenges as regards welfare covered by the reform, we also have a lot of challenges in the labour sector. I would like to comment on certain sections of the Director-General's Report in this regard. I refer to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. The guarantee of these rights and fundamental principles is particularly significant because it should ensure that the stakeholders are entitled to claim and to enjoy on an equal basis the wealth, the creation of which they have contributed to, and to develop their human potential.

One of the cornerstones of this empowerment is the right to collective bargaining which has been very weak in Chile. In fact, according to the latest figures, only 12.8 per cent of our workforce are members of trade unions and only 10.3 per cent are covered by a collective agreement. This is to some extent paradoxical, as unlike many Latin American countries, our labour market is highly formalized. The main problem is not, therefore, the informal sector. In her manifesto, President Bachelet promised to reverse the declining trend of collective bargaining and low coverage and improve the quality of collective bargaining. We are taking steps forward in this regard. Obviously this is all very complex, as the Director-General says in his Report.

In Chile, contracting by agencies and flexi-work is having a negative impact on collective bargaining. Then we have the problem of the fragmentation of enterprises which leads to the division of unions and ignores the fact that workers belong to a single bargaining organization. In her last annual report, the President focused on the need to face these additional challenges and pushed forward the law to that effect. It was first decided to strengthen the trade union as the basis for collective bargaining on the grounds that parallel systems undermine trade unions and their negotiating power. Secondly, it was established that those who do not belong to a trade union but who benefit from collective agreements should have similar financial obligations to the union members, thereby modifying a skewed system of incentives. Thirdly, the President has announced measures aimed at strengthening collective bargaining broadening its scope and encouraging it in enterprises. At the present time, these activities have been restricted by law and therefore we need to simplify the legislation that hinders rather than helps constructive collective bargaining. Fourthly, we wish to ensure that we do away with abusive practices in the area of trade unionism. In this regard, we are convinced that ensuring that the labour market is governed by collective bargaining instruments, promotes, as indicated in the Director-General's Report, a climate of mutual understand-

ing and social peace. This will ensure that the product of economic activity will be shared more fairly.

Lastly, as the Report indicates, trade unionism is a way of avoiding conflict in collective bargaining. Furthermore, exercising the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining requires a conducive environment that is not limited to legislation but includes the need to have the support of strong and efficient employers' and workers' organizations.

In this area, Chile has a fundamental asymmetry, and for this reason another one of the measures promoted by the President was the establishment of a national trade union school for strengthening and modernizing leadership for training union officials and for promoting solid and modern trade unionism, which is a fundamental pillar of adequate bilateral relations of mutual interest.

Lastly, in the light of the characteristics of our labour market, characterized among other things, by high turnover and the proliferation of atypical contracts, we are seeking to develop the system of unemployment benefits, a mechanism we pioneered in Latin America, but which requires a qualitative leap forward. Our government coalition, which has continually promoted growth policies based on social equality, firmly adheres to the principle established in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. Namely, that economic and social policies should be strengthened mutually through broad-based sustainable development.

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Mr TATEISI (*Employer, Japan*)

The cyclone that struck Burma and the huge earthquake in China last month left tremendous damage in both countries and took the lives of many people. These two disasters filled all of us with deep grief and I would hereby like to express my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved in both countries.

The Report of the Director-General this year is an extremely enthusiastic exhortation to strive for the solution of the urgent problems facing the world with the progress of globalization through implementation of the Decent Work Agenda. The problems we see are worsening poverty and widening income gaps as well as the outbreak of financial crises on a worldwide scale.

I believe that the meaning of decent work varies from country to country due to differing economic and social circumstances. Today I would like to comment on a key issue for the achievement of decent work in Japan, i.e. the efforts to improve work-life balance.

Japan is being confronted with a decline in the workforce due to the steep decrease in the birth rate and a very fast ageing of the population. There are apprehensions about an accompanying decline in economic vitality and international competitiveness. The situation calls for the construction of a labour market inducing the maximum exercise of the capabilities of all people who can work. Post-war Japan won material affluence thanks to its booming economic growth but there are now mounting inclinations to seek personal fulfilment that have been neglected so far. This situation has made it a major priority to attain a proper work-life balance, i.e. a good balance between work and personal life by allowing styles of work that are not bound by constraints of time or place. In this way, we encourage entry into the labour market by women and the

aged, who have thus far been under-represented for various reasons associated with childcare, child-birth, nursing care and the like. It also holds prospects for an increase in productivity as more workers feel more satisfied with their jobs and go about them with higher motivation. As such, I think it brings benefits for both employees and employers.

Last December, Japan formulated the Work–Life Balance Charter and guidelines for action on this front. These steps set forth the orientations for national approaches to a proper work–life balance. They make clear statements on the need for a better balance, the shape of society upon achieving it, the roles to be played by government and social partners, and their respective tasks to this end. I consider it highly significant that the charter and guidelines were formulated on the basis of consensus through repeated discussions among government, labour and management over a period of about half a year, instead of being legislated unilaterally by the Government. For the realization of decent work, it is of vital importance for the three sides to engage in frequent dialogue.

As I see it, corporate enterprises are entrusted by society with human, material and financial resources as wherewithal for their business. In my opinion, it is their mission to make effective use of these resources and create goods and services that enrich society as a whole. This is in agreement with the conclusion of the Director-General’s Report, which states that “many broader goals cannot be achieved without the contribution of sustainable enterprises growing in a favourable social and economic environment ...”. In other words, enterprises should be entities that help to make people happy by creating wealth and jobs while contributing to economic advancement and promotion of decent work. Only if they live up to social expectations can they remain trusted by society and continue to subsist. As we go about our duties, we corporate managers must always keep this idea of enterprises as social entities uppermost in our minds. I would also like to see it extensively shared among the constituents.

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*Original Spanish: Mr PASCO COSMÓPOLIS (Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion, Peru)*

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In 2007 poverty in my country, Peru, decreased by more than 5 per cent. This is a record figure, never before attained and impressive at a global level.

More impressive is the figure for poverty reduction in rural coastal areas, which stands at around 10 per cent points. Analysts attribute this significant progress in the fight against poverty to, inter alia, the establishment of a specific labour law regime, which covers the needs and genuine prospects of agricultural business persons, and also grants and guarantees workers’ fundamental rights, not only those enshrined in the ILO Declaration of 1998, but also many others which derive from my country’s Constitution, and in particular it grants workers access to social security through lower than average contributions.

These facts very clearly reflect two of the major strategic objectives set out by the Director-General in his Global Report: gradual access for the rural sector to decent work and the establishment of a threshold, a social minimum in terms of rights for workers, enabling step-by-step progress to be made towards the major goal of decent work. With this in

mind, my country has adopted two decisions that we consider to be of utmost importance. Before the end of June 2008, we will see the entry into force of a special Act on support for micro- and small enterprises. This will be a state policy, which will be horizontally and vertically binding, in other words across the board for all state bodies and also for private enterprise, chambers of commerce, trade unions and civil society.

Moreover, the Government has charged the Ministry of Labour with the development of micro- and small enterprises. It is rare for such work to be taken on by ministries of labour. In other countries, this responsibility falls under the work of the ministries of the economy, industry or production. Peru is therefore a pioneer in stressing the social aspect of this development. We should bear in mind that the micro-entrepreneur is, in general, a worker, a worker who is providing employment to other workers. This work may be of poor quality, particularly if it is informal, and it should be improved. It is therefore logical, in our view, that the political focus on micro- and small enterprise should be social, rather than economic or tax-based. Furthermore, as the Director-General indicated in his Global Report, there is also a need to foster an entrepreneurial culture and to build sustainable enterprise through training and entrepreneurial capacity building, which are typically tasks taken on by labour ministries. It is therefore no wonder that the ILO is the international organization responsible for such issues, including informal work, micro- and small enterprise, professional training and capacity building.

We believe that, in the future, the initiative taken by Peru could be replicated and other countries might charge ministries of labour with supporting and developing micro- and small enterprise. There could be no better occasion to invite the distinguished participants of this Conference to analyse these initiatives, taken by a developing country to step up their fight against poverty.

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*Original Arabic: Mr EL-AZALY (Worker, Egypt)*

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First of all, I would like to turn to you and express my congratulations on behalf of the workers of Egypt and on my own behalf, on the occasion of this latest session of the International Labour Conference.

Every year, this Conference is a sign of renewed hope for our workers, thanks to the tripartite constituents working in the interests of humanity, within a framework of social justice and peace.

However, we must recognize that this year, the Conference is being held at a time when we are witnessing serious developments. A number of countries in the world, in particular developing countries, are threatened by hunger and poverty, as well as social unrest. The Conference is being held at a time when we are suffering from the effects of an acute economic crisis and soaring food costs. Also an unjustified increase in fuel costs due to speculation, and this is to the advantage of the international oil cartels.

All this is accompanied by the use of immoral, diabolical technology which violates human rights. This technology, whereby cereals and oil seeds are turned into biofuel, is at a time when we should be seeking to develop inexpensive renewable energy, in particular wind and solar energy.

Even though the agenda of our Conference was decided on two years ago, before the arrival of these serious developments on the international scene, we feel that a serious violation of the Standing Orders of the Conference has been committed in deliberately deciding that the Resolutions Committee should not meet this year to discuss the Organization's role with regard to these new developments. The Director-General, admittedly, tried to report on these events through his Report entitled, *Decent work – Some strategic challenges ahead*, but we need to focus as a priority on these challenges and adopt a practical, exhaustive approach to face them.

This year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the adoption of Convention No. 87 on freedom of association. We feel that this is like a life insurance for workers and their trade union organizations throughout the world. We feel that we must ensure the respect for and implementation of the provisions of this Convention by everyone. We also feel that we should take into account national choices, national characteristics and customs in the area of professional relations. We should also take into consideration prevailing economic and social conditions, as well as the history and struggles of our trade union organization, which is recognized and stable, and avoid making unjust accusations. In this respect, we should perhaps point out that the Egyptian Trade Union Federation is conducting negotiations with the government and employers in order to achieve a minimum wage that would guarantee workers a dignified life, in particular because of soaring food prices.

Before concluding, and with regard to the Appendix to the Report of the Director-General concerning the situation of the workers in Palestine and in the occupied territories of the Syrian Golan and Lebanon, I would urge the international community to take all necessary measures to ensure that Israel puts an end to its occupation and its extremist barbarian practices and that it respects the calls for peace so that the peoples of the region can devote their attention to the development and construction of their society.

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Mr MLECZKO (*Government, Poland*)

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This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

In 1998, when globalization was gaining momentum, the delegates to the Conference reached an agreement and adopted a document confirming the most important and the most fundamental of workers' rights – human rights at work. The unquestionable success of the Declaration is the rapid increase in ratifications of the fundamental ILO Conventions; however, the Global Reports prove that there is still plenty to be done to ensure full compliance with the Conventions in all countries. The result of the Declaration is also the decent work concept; the idea which had its origin in this house is currently recognized and supported around the world as one of the main instruments for achieving a social dimension of globalization. The efforts of the ILO helped the leaders of countries and governments, but also the international business community, to understand that the largest possible number of people should have access to the achievements of globalization.

During this session of the Conference, the Director-General is addressing this extremely important

issue in his Report, *Decent work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, by giving the solutions for the practical implementation of the decent work concept.

These days, when the world is searching for a new, hopefully more stable, approach to growth and development, decent work proves to be a sustainable option. Although there is no single definition of decent work and the concept includes different elements in different countries, there is no doubt that fundamental rights at work are at the core of this concept. I agree with the Director-General that the common ground for the developed and developing countries with regard to the decent work concept is the lifecycle approach. Each country must develop its own road map in order to achieve the decent work goals.

Poland, like other European Union Member States, focuses on the community acquis, the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment of the European Social Agenda and efforts aimed at the ratification and application of up-to-date ILO Conventions. At the same time, numerous developing countries receive invaluable assistance from the ILO in this regard through Decent Work Country Programmes. These ILO activities merit support and recognition.

Decent work contributes significantly to poverty reduction as it supports employment – the most certain way out of poverty. The creation and maintenance of new jobs and the reduction of unemployment are among the priorities of the Polish National Reform Programme for 2008 to implement the Lisbon Strategy. Special attention is being paid to the most disadvantaged people, who are the target groups of programmes such as the Active Forms of Social Exclusion Prevention Programme, the Social Cooperatives Support Programme or the Solidarity between Generations Programme – all measures to increase the vocational activity of people aged 50-plus. The long-lasting tendency of decreasing unemployment and increasing employment facilitates the struggle for decent work in Poland.

The decent work goals cannot be achieved without social dialogue. We work together with employers' and workers' organizations within the Tripartite Commission for Economic and Social Affairs on the most important social and economic problems of the country, such as the model and mechanisms of wage increases, vocational activation of people aged 50-plus, the coherent pension system and the strengthening of social dialogue. We also undertake efforts to reinforce dialogue at the enterprise level by providing employees with the right to participate in the management of enterprises through employees' councils. These allow employees to enter into dialogue with an employer, to get involved in the matters concerning the enterprise and to build mutual trust. Furthermore, together with our social partners, we have planned activities aimed at the development of social dialogue within the framework of the Human Capital Operational Programme, co-financed using European funds.

Next year, we will be celebrating the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the ILO, the Organization that has proven its value in the most difficult and crucial moments in history. The ongoing global financial turmoil which, in the longer term, may adversely affect both workers and employers, calls on the ILO to be ready again. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization developed

by the Conference this year, which will integrate the decent work goal with the previous ILO goals, is set to prepare the Organization for new challenges and to strengthen its ability to assist member States to cope with the requirements of a new social and economic reality. Although we believe that this Declaration is extremely important, it is only one stage of the implementation of the decent work goals and of shaping fair globalization.

Perhaps it is too simplistic to imagine an idealized world of decent work and a balanced economy; however, we believe that the ideals of decent work, social justice and fair globalization are undoubtedly efficient vehicles into the future.

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Mr ABDELLA (*Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ethiopia*)

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This session of the International Labour Conference has before it the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General. Ethiopia gives its unqualified support to the social policy elements embodied in this year's Report of the Director-General. In a fair, just and democratic setting, everyone expects economic growth to bring social justice. But, unfortunately, whenever there is an increase in production, we invariably observe an increase in inequality and inequitable distribution of wealth. However, without social justice there will not be complete democracy and sustainable development. Hence, we welcome the social policy theme put forward by the ILO in order to capitalize on the human issue as a centre of everything we do. It is really a challenge to set a policy framework which would cope effectively with the changing global economy and social conditions. This task can only be fulfilled provided that measures at national level are supplemented by international actions in terms of an equitable economic environment.

As combating poverty is the major challenge facing us, we should seek for an equitable and inclusive environment whereby our economic policies and strategies ensure consistency, sustainability and fairness.

That requires us to synchronize key policy issues where economic and social policies need to be aligned to the objective of poverty eradication. There is a need to place emphasis on the education of children and young people before they join the labour market. It is also essential to prevent discrimination as regards education, work and vocational training. Social dialogue is also a very important tool to foster a shared responsibility, especially in conditions of precarious employment and economic insecurity.

In view of this, it is our strong belief that the ILO is uniquely positioned to create the platform to advance social justice and maintain sustainable development by mainstreaming Decent Work in its effort to combat poverty. We also appreciate the ongoing effort of the ILO to make Decent Work a reality in Africa by introducing an integrated approach to employment creation as one of the ways to reduce poverty.

Ethiopia is one of the beneficiaries of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes. An important component of these programmes is that they enable implementing countries not only to focus on employment creation but also to give room to principles and rights, social protection and social dialogue, which are often weak in the realities of developing countries.

Since poverty is a complex and serious phenomenon, the Decent Work Agenda, which accommodates both the human and material aspects of work, is an effective alternative, and the ILO will have to concentrate its efforts in making it a reality in all parts of the world. To that end, the Government of Ethiopia supports, and will continue to support, the policy of partnership between the ILO and other international and regional organizations to provide technical and financial assistance to developing countries, particularly least developed countries.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation of the concern of the ILO to harness social policy as a tool to integrate social growth into economic growth, which is always a challenge for all of us in the developing world. I wish to reiterate the support of my Government to the efforts carried out by the ILO to implement policies and actions that will help our countries in poverty reduction.

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*Original Spanish: Mr BONOMI (Government, Uruguay)*

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This is the fourth consecutive year that we have given an account of the work undertaken by the Government of Uruguay in the areas of labour, employment and labour relations in our country. We have reported on the reduction in unemployment since 2005 until the present day. In 2005, unemployment stood at 12.5–13 per cent, but we have cut this figure every year and, at the current time, it stands at 7.6 per cent. We are sure that this figure will continue to decrease and that next year, the 90th anniversary of the ILO, when we return here to report on cuts in unemployment, we shall be able to surprise you with further downward trends. The Government's objective was to cut unemployment to below 10 per cent in five years. We achieved this goal in a year and a half and, since then, this trend has been maintained.

At the end of last year, there was sustained social dialogue with workers and employers on a range of issues; however, this was undermined because the employers withdraw from negotiations on anything related to standards, laws and labour relations decrees. They did not withdraw from negotiations in wage councils or from discussions on work and developments of employment and production in the National Committee on Employment, Income and Responsibilities; neither did they withdraw from discussions and drafting work to enhance occupational safety and health. However, they withdrew from discussions on standards because of disagreements with respect to the approval, in the National Parliament, of a law on outsourcing.

After the employers had withdrawn the Executive submitted three bills to the Legislature: one on eight hours of work in the rural sector; another on collective bargaining in the public sector; and a further bill on private-sector collective bargaining.

The bill on eight hours of work in the rural sector was approved following more than two years of discussion in the Rural Wage Council. Although consensus was achieved on the vast majority of the articles contained in this bill, it failed to be reached on a very important issue: how to remunerate the time worked beyond the statutory eight hours. A vote had to be taken in order to reach a decision. The majority was achieved, with the Government and workers voting for, and the employers against.

The other two bills on collective bargaining were sent before Parliament without tripartite discussion since the enterprise sector had withdrawn from

these discussions. The bill on collective bargaining in the private sector attempted to set up three distinct levels: the establishment of a national minimum wage by decree, following consultation by the parties; tripartite negotiation by branch, using the scheme set up by our wage councils to establish basic salaries and work categories; and finally bipartite enterprise-based negotiation with a view to discussing issues that could not be covered by the wage councils.

Finally, the bill contained a chapter on disputes settlement, setting out guidelines for the vacation of enterprise premises occupied by the workers. Clearly, for various reasons, this chapter was questioned both by workers and employers.

On the basis of the questions raised by the employers, a meeting was organized at the Chamber of Commerce, attended by the Ministry of Labour and the Deputy Minister for Industry; Mr Daniel Funes de Rioja, the Chairperson of the IOE, also participated in the meeting. Mr Funes de Rioja indicated in general terms that the Government could put forward any bill it wished and that, in such cases, the IOE was not required to voice its opinion on the majority of articles – with the exception, in this case, of sections 22–24 of the chapter on disputes settlements. In this respect, he expressed his serious concern about the statements made in connection with the occupation of workplaces. He reiterated that the ILO had to deal with the issue of occupation as a very real fact. However, the bill in question, by establishing guidelines for vacating workplaces, implicitly acknowledged occupations of premises as a right, and this was unacceptable to the ILO.

Whilst we have been attending this Conference, representatives of 24 Uruguayan Chambers of Commerce have met with the President of the Republic, Dr Tabaré Vázquez, to voice their disagreement about the content of the chapter on disputes settlement. They also voiced disagreement about the extension of agreements on collective bargaining and expressed their concerns that the bill failed to provide differential treatment for SMEs. We had already foreseen this. The chapter on disputes settlement will be fully withdrawn from the bill, which will now include a chapter allowing for differential treatment within the wage councils for struggling enterprises, enterprises taken over by their workers and SMEs providing information supporting their need for special treatment.

To conclude my statement, I would recall that, 60 years ago, the General Labour Conference approved one of the most significant ILO Conventions, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). This is a figurehead Convention not only because of the number of ratifications – 148 countries, including Uruguay – but also because it represents a genuine emblem of freedom of association. We feel it is relevant, in this ambit, to commemorate the ratification of a Convention which acknowledged ideas ahead of its time after a century of struggles for the right of workers to join together and establish associations.

Freedom of association is a prerequisite for democracy without which it is impossible to achieve fair social and economic development. It is for that reason that I am delighted, as Minister of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Uruguay, to celebrate not only the 60th anniversary of this standard-setting instrument but also to express my pro-

found conviction for the principles and rights of freedom of association contained therein.

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*Original French: Mr MONTEIRO (representative, International Association of Economic and Social Councils and similar Institutions)*

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Cooperation between the International Labour Organization and the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and similar Institutions (IAESCSI) is developing. It involves two institutions which are based on broad, unrestricted social dialogue. The recent Report of the Director-General is proof of this. It places freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining at the heart of any economic and social progress, a right which the Economic and Social Councils that are members of the IAESCSI are also seeking to promote.

I am extremely pleased to hear the news that the Conference has included on its agenda the topic of promoting rural employment in order to reduce poverty.

Only a policy which observes international labour standards and respects the environment will bring about the possibility of developing quality employment within the context of promoting decent work.

We are convinced that nations must develop economic policies orientated towards professional certification and qualifications, facilitating an increase in qualified and highly productive labour.

On behalf of the Councils, we support the efforts that the ILO is undertaking to get us out of the current vicious circle involving low qualifications, low level of productivity, informal labour and recurrent poverty, and into a virtuous circle of quality, more productive and formal employment with better incomes and social protection for workers and their families.

This reflection ties in with the debate on the Millennium Development Goals, with special attention being devoted to rural populations, which are the ones that are the most vulnerable and most affected by world poverty.

Rural areas are on the margins of social progress and, too often, economic conditions destroy the bases of traditional systems of exchange and solidarity.

Worldwide, the evil of poverty demonstrates the little attention that we are paying to the tragedy which is affecting the rural world. Stabilization of rural populations has become the major challenge for preserving economic and social balances. There are various dimensions to the issue of employment in the rural sector. In brief, this sector displays three major features: one, a situation of overpopulation associated with tiny incomes and a high level of unemployment; two, a capital-based agriculture characterized by the use of labour which is becoming increasingly scarce or by the process of increasing mechanization; and three, an agriculture in transition of a dualistic nature which combines the two previous situations, but which has reached saturation as regards its capacity to create jobs.

I would like to remind you that the theme proposed for the period of the Brazilian presidency of the IAESCSI is equitable development and environmental responsibility, with specific focus on energy and its links to development and the environment.

The issue of renewable energy and biofuels highlights aspects relevant to all people. Biofuels may

be an effective way of extending the benefits of globalization to the vast majority of the world's poor while at the same time providing an appropriate response to the challenge of global warming.

However, as we have seen today, this is a controversial issue which calls for in-depth reflection.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) attribute great importance to reducing poverty in the rural sector through the reduction of people who suffer from extreme poverty, by half, by 2015.

The Economic and Social Councils are in agreement on this issue. It is essential to turn towards new models. The new vision of employment in the rural sector must bring new perspectives in order to increase jobs.

Rural areas could become territories of the future, if we can solve the problem of winning back the land, and could become a source of wealth and innovation.

As regards the emerging countries, it would be worthwhile favouring rural investment in complementary activities which would enable excess workers to apply, under favourable conditions, in their own regions.

These are some of the new strategic challenges to make it possible to overcome the shortcomings and limits of market regulation mechanisms. The appearance of multiple job holdings, green jobs, and innovative, autonomous rurality, constitute the basis for eco-development based on an environment involving solidarity, as advocated by the ILO and the FAO.

To conclude, the issue of rural employment concerns both the national and international communities. It is clear that achieving the MDGs will require a rehabilitation of the rural sector.

The Social and Economic Councils have mobilized, under the guidance of the ILO, to combat unemployment and develop social dialogue.

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*Original Bulgarian Mr HRISTOV (Worker, Bulgaria)*

I am convinced that the decisions taken at the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference will serve as the basis for labour relations issues to be resolved more justly and humanely throughout the world.

As a representative of Bulgarian workers and their representative organizations, I would like to express particularly strong support for those parts of the Report of the Director-General that touch upon the protection of the fundamental principles and rights at work, employment and social protection. The issues directly concern the interests of all workers worldwide.

Since 1 January 2007, Bulgaria has been a full member of the European Union. Bulgarian workers associate this development with their hopes of prosperity and social well-being.

In my country, for a number of years, we have seen a sustainable trend towards macroeconomic stability and relatively high economic growth (6.2 per cent in 2007).

Against that background, however, we do have a few causes for concern. Firstly, our trade deficit of minus 22.1 per cent. Our second cause of concern is rising inflation, which rose to 14.6 per cent between April 2007 and April 2008. Foodstuffs have increased in price by 25 per cent.

At the same time however, the Government registered a budgetary surplus equivalent to 3.4 per cent of GDP, which was achieved thanks to the restric-

tive policies pursued regarding spending to finance important parts of the public sector, such as education and health care.

The level of relative poverty in the country is about 14 per cent. Urban poverty can be clearly seen in monetary terms whereas rural poverty relates to access to the labour market, education, health care and other social services.

Despite positive changes that have taken place in our labour market – a drop in unemployment to 6.9 per cent and an employment co-efficient of 61.7 per cent – we still have major challenges to face, including high unemployment in rural areas, up to 25 per cent, and an acute shortage of skilled workers and, in some sectors, unskilled workers. Despite all of that, social dialogue, particularly on wage increases, is difficult and does not achieve the results that would make it possible to stabilize our workforce and to ensure that workers can enjoy the fruits of economic growth in accordance with their contribution to it.

The increased number of cases of discrimination against trade unionists, noted in the Director-General's Report, is worrying. I am sorry to have to say that attempts to infringe fundamental trade union rights can be observed in Bulgaria. Proceedings against the leaders of two of the largest teaching unions in the country are under way. The complaints relate to a strike of more than 110,000 teachers and non-teaching staff which took place from 24 September to 5 November 2007. We have informed the International Trade Union Confederation of this and we hope that the ILO will examine this case with interest as the aim is to intimidate trade unions and perhaps in the future to restrict the right to strike, which is recognized in the Constitution. As part of the campaign to protect fundamental trade union rights, the Bulgarian trade unions call for the ratification of the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168), the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), and the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the secretariat of the ILO and the ILO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, in Budapest, for their support as we seek to defend the rights of workers and I hope that this fruitful cooperation will continue to develop in future.

*(Mr Louh takes the Chair.)*

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*Mr MUNYES (Minister for Labour, Kenya)*

The Report on the work of the Governing Body since the last Conference refers to a number of developments, in particular the initiative taken by the Office to follow up our discussions on the promotion of sustainable enterprises, which is commendable, given our quest for employment creation.

We also commend the Office on the new training programme that is to be piloted in partnership with the ILO's International Training Centre and welcome the *Toolkit for mainstreaming employment* recently endorsed by the United Nations. Its application should take into account the vast experience of the constituents, and provide a practical approach to the Millennium development goals.

The programme should receive wider dissemination among the member States, as well as technical

assistance for its implementation. The ILO has formulated policies with innovative approaches to providing such assistance in our country. The programme meets the challenge of raising standards in the world of work, which is an uphill task.

With regard to reforms in the United Nations system, we join the Employers' and Workers' groups in stressing the need to safeguard the tripartite character of the ILO and full participation of the social partners in the process.

Regarding the World Bank's *Doing Business* report, my delegation reiterates our real concern about a number of conclusions that seem inconsistent with international labour standards. These conclusions should therefore be removed.

Another area that calls for further tripartite consultation is the ILO field structure review. Kenya strongly feels that this tripartite consultation needs to continue on the basis of the Office proposals, prior to the publication of the documents to be produced in March 2009. Information reports from each office need to be counter-checked to ensure that they reflect the reality on the ground.

The campaign for ratification of instruments of amendment to the ILO Constitution is also of tremendous significance to us in this house. We urge member States that have not already done so to ratify the instruments that facilitate the achievement of Africa's quest for a permanent seat on the Governing Body.

My delegation welcomes the programme implementation report, but would like also to see indicators of the strategic policy framework for 2010–15. Kenya supports the idea of a balance between the democratic voice of society and the regulatory function of the State that meets the aspirations of families and the communities. This in the past was ignored to the extent that the State was left without a role to play and governments were called upon only when all inappropriate policy prescriptions failed.

Policy forecasts for the period up to 2015 ought to give priority to sustainable enterprises, security of workers, equality of income, access to credit, fair trade rules and the elimination of poor-quality jobs in the informal economy that are destabilizing for workers, in particular women and young people.

We hope that, as we approach 2015, the difficulties of translating policies into practice and building strong social dialogue at home will be addressed so as to promote effective negotiations leading to their implementation in our country programmes.

As we move towards 2015, dialogue should give priority to the formulation of policies that stimulate job creation and the social protection of low-income earners, which are major challenges in the world of work. We would also like the social partners to be more involved in the implementation of the strategic policy framework for the period between 2010 and 2015.

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Mr CHARLES (*Minister of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica*)

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This year the Global Report, *Freedom of association in practice: Lessons learned*, by the Director-General, addresses the crucial area of freedom of association. This is an area of paramount importance for productive employment relationships in the variety of working arrangements which exist worldwide.

We are pleased to report that in Jamaica we take freedom of association and effective recognition of

the right to collective bargaining seriously. Jamaica has ratified Conventions Nos 87 and 98 that deal with freedom of association and collective bargaining. More importantly, over the years we have sought to give Conventions practical meaning and application through supporting labour relations and industrial relations acts.

Freedom of association must work hand in hand with three major objectives of the Decent Work Agenda – decent and productive work for all men and women, social protection and social dialogue. We have therefore focused on strategic initiatives related to these objectives. We have given special attention to job creation and employment, especially for the youth. Currently, a tripartite group is developing a special “earn and learn” initiative for persons aged between 18 and 25, with emphasis on inner city and rural communities. We look forward to the results of the general discussion on promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction at this Conference, for further insight as we shape and implement this programme. This effort complements the National Youth Service, Young Entrepreneurs Association and the Jamaica Youth Employment Network coordinated by the Jamaica Employers' Federation.

The Jamaica Productivity Centre has been bolstered by a tripartite advisory board and additional staff to help tackle the task of a national productivity employment drive. We consider the areas of skills development and lifelong learning as critical for achieving employability, income improvement and productivity for competitiveness. Consequently, our National Training Agency is expanding the School Leavers' Training Programme, as well as implementing a special intensified drive for skills training and internationally recognized certification.

We are using three guiding principles for development and expansion of our social protection programme. Firstly, that social protection is a human right; secondly, that the provision of social security benefits must be a shared responsibility of the individual and the social partners – Government, employers and trade unions; and thirdly, the principle of inclusion which aims at addressing persons in all sectors of economic activity – formal and informal. Using these principles, we are planning to give special attention to social protection schemes for four vulnerable groups: persons below the poverty line; pensioners, whose pension has not kept pace with inflation; part-time workers and workers suffering from job losses and redundancy for whom there are no pension plans; and workers who retire as temporary workers without any provision for pension.

In Jamaica, we use social dialogue as an important vehicle for finding effective solutions for workplace issues. The Tripartite Labour Advisory Committee plays a central role in this process. We are also planning a national social dialogue on social protection to arrive at consensus on critical issues of universal coverage for social security benefits and affordability. We look forward to the assistance of the ILO in its effort through its Subregional Offices for the Caribbean.

I would like to commend the ILO for continuing the process of strengthening its capacity to service its Members with greater impact despite the global challenges for the achievement of sustainable development. Jamaica looks forward to expansion of the Decent Work Country Programmes of the ILO and the benefits that it can derive from them.

The Report, *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead* marks the tenth anniversary (a decade of effort) of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

We commend the ILO and all its Members on the finalization of the authoritative document in the shape of the "ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization". While this Declaration aims to enhance the ILO's engagement in the present-day globalizing world, we believe that it would not impose new or substantive obligations on member States, as every individual member State is best placed to respond to its specific situation in developing ways and programmes for promoting decent work.

The policy focus of the Government of Pakistan is on the creation of employment, poverty reduction and human resource development. Decent work is recognized as a fundamental right and efforts are being directed towards generating quality employment under conditions of freedom, equality and social protection. Pakistan launched its Decent Work Country Programme together with its social partners in September 2005.

The importance attached can be gauged by the fact that these areas are echoed strongly in the 100-day programme of the new Government, announced by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 29 March 2008. The programme includes: (i) the setting up of an Employment Commission to create and facilitate the creation of jobs in the public and private sectors; (ii) a National Employment Scheme to provide employment to one member of every poor families living below the poverty line; (iii) the construction of 1 million housing units, together with schemes for the homeless in rural areas; (iv) doubling the number of female health workers to cover urban slums and small towns; (v) a 30 per cent rise in the minimum wage of unskilled workers; (vi) raising the minimum pension from 15 to 30 per cent for the workers.

May I also bring to the notice of this gathering the fact that Pakistan has ratified all the core labour Conventions of the ILO.

All these measures demonstrate recognition at the highest level with regards to creating conditions for decent work. There is also an implicit recognition of the crucial link between availability of decent work, productive employment for able and willing adults and sustainability of socio-economic development. This centrality of employment in economic and social policy is closely linked to considerations such as increased productivity as well as the technical, vocation, educational and training competence of the workforce and future flows into the labour market. A massive programme enhancing competence has been launched.

The medium-term development framework of the country incorporating goals and targets of the poverty reduction strategy has adopted an employment-led expansionary approach. Our vision for 2030 has also identified decent work as the main channel for poverty reduction. The role of the private sector is recognized as crucial in generating decent work. It is strengthened by appropriate policy interventions. Moreover, the Government is using public sector development programmes to create additional employment.

We are concerned over the deteriorating situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, where poverty is on the rise and the employment situation is bleak. Hope for improvement, despite efforts by the international community, of the social and labour condition of workers in the occupied Arab territories remains depressing.

We must all act collectively to help avert a serious humanitarian crisis in the occupied territories, especially in Gaza. Continued economic restriction would only add to frustration and hatred amongst the most deprived Palestinian workforce. This would only take us further away from lasting peace.

We have made an attempt here to provide a glimpse of the efforts of the Government of Pakistan towards ensuring decent work. Our Conference here indeed would prove useful in gathering insight on learning and sharing experiences with each other.

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*Original Arabic:* Mr LUQMAN (representative, Arab Labour Organization)

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I would like to express my sincere admiration for Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, and the wisdom with which he has guided this Organization through an increasingly difficult period, during which the world of work has undergone profound changes.

The Director-General has always displayed great creativity in his unceasing efforts to establish the principles of decent work.

I would also like to thank him for his understanding with regards labour issues affecting Arab countries and for the support he has lent to the development of employment in those nations. Over the course of a year in which our Memorandum of Understanding was renewed and an implementation programme was scrupulously carried out and extended to cover new ambitions regarding employment support, cooperation and coordination between the International Labour Office and the Arab Labour Organization (ALO) have blossomed dramatically.

We also took part in positive negotiations concerning the tragic situation affecting work and workers in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories. In this regard, we would like to pay homage to the efforts of the Office, as well as to the work carried out by the ILO mission which visited the region and drew up a Report on the situation, a Report that we, the Arab group, along with other groups, await each year. As ever, we hope that this Report will present this dire state of affairs from a viewpoint which draws on the humanity contained in the Declaration of Philadelphia and the other international instruments.

We have put forward our observations as the Arab group concerning the Report submitted to this session and we hope that they will be taken into account and added to that Report. We also hope that the concrete proposals contained in the document will truly be implemented thanks to wide-scale international participation and the efforts of the Organization, be it in the form of the Conference, the Governing Body or the Office.

It is only right that the Arab region should be the focus of this august assembly's attention. As you know, it is an area which has suffered from war, conflict, crises and constant tensions which threaten global peace and security, as well as the lives of the region's workers and its chances of development.

ILO studies and documents show that unemployment in the region is the worst in the world, and this has been the case for over two decades.

When we call for greater attention to be paid to employment in this region, it is to real needs that we refer and we hope that the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection will finally be made a priority by all, so that it may respond to the needs of the social partners in Palestine following a long wait during which it almost became a mirage.

Thus we call for an international conference on Palestine to be held, organized by the ILO, so that the international community can participate in the implementation of the proposals which have been, and continue to be, submitted by the ILO mission which visits the region each year.

We also hope that the Office will develop its efforts to strengthen capacity in Iraq and Lebanon and that it will participate in the construction of social peace in Darfur and Sudan, as well as in the creation of a climate of understanding in Somalia which will allow for the re-establishment of a unified State and will boost production activities in that country.

We congratulate the Director-General on the progress made regarding the implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and on the increased number of ratification of fundamental labour Conventions. We appreciate his renewed initiatives aimed at establishing decent work in all the member States and his efforts in the face of the negative impact of globalization on the world of work. We are also grateful for his concern regarding the human and social dimensions of globalization.

The Director-General's Report on freedom of association teaches us much about reality in the Arab countries where the crises and tensions facing us in the region have not undermined the significant advances made in this field. Over the last decade, there has been noticeable progress in terms of trade union freedoms, development with regards collective bargaining and improvement of social dialogue. However, much remains to be done and our countries are making every effort to move forward. As you all know, our region, more than any other, is confronted with the challenges of globalization and the consequences of economic reform, to the extent that it plays host to a large, foreign workforce which, in some cases, greatly outnumbers the local population. This is a unique situation, one which no other area of the world has experienced over such a short period of time, and it is this very region which suffers from high levels of unemployment.

These are just some of the issues facing the Arab region and they allow us to understand the international community's concerns while appreciating the responsibilities of this Conference and the challenges affecting the world of work at what is a decisive moment in the history of humanity.

I wish this Conference every success, as its outcome will affect most of the world's inhabitants.

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*Original Portuguese: Mr SILVA SANTOS (Worker, Brazil)*

This International Labour Conference is being held against a backdrop of increasing uncertainty and threats against workers across the whole world. Over and above globalization, which has proved incapable of ensuring a fair distribution of the wealth generated by efficiency and economic growth, we are now faced with an unprecedented financial crisis.

This crisis, the consequences of which are still unforeseeable, may endanger the little social inclusion that we have achieved over recent years and therefore it is appropriate to talk about decent work here.

Globalization has aggravated social and economic differences and has led to increased social exclusion. From this podium, for years now, workers have been complaining about social exclusion and the democratic deficit resulting from this process. In many places, but above all in Latin America, and especially in my country, Brazil, recently we have seen a political reaction to these negative consequences. The struggles of the workers and civil society have achieved success in developing decent work. Thanks to the trade unions and civil society who combined economic demands with active participation in the electoral process, we have been able to use the influence of the workers to pressure the Government to change and move forward in establishing new policies on social inclusion and income distribution. Successful social programmes, such as the Bolsa Familia and the Decent Work Agenda of the Brazilian Government, are proof of this. State Governments have begun their own programmes. At almost all levels of Government in Brazil, various central trade union organizations and their affiliated unions have been actively participating. These programmes have had a positive effect in terms of social inclusion and poverty reduction.

We are threatened by a world economic recession. The Director-General's thoughts and words are more relevant than ever. The objectives of decent work must be defended if we do not wish to lose what little the workers have gained in terms of social inclusion.

The present crisis makes the increasingly perverse role of the financial institutions in globalization clear. Their influence accentuates the irrational and anti-social nature of globalization. States are, on their own, unable to oppose the "financialization" of the global economy, putting at risk jobs and, at the end of the day, increasing poverty levels. The response has been to raise interest rates, resulting in lower spending, reduced consumption, a fall in production, and, finally, more job losses.

We must return to the ILO's source of inspiration for innovative programmes such as that on decent work. In Copenhagen at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 there was a clear call for States to take up again their active role at a national and international level.

Owing to the financial crisis, States must take up their regulatory role in the markets and promote effective integration of economic and social policies. The plenary of this Conference must firmly call upon the Bretton Woods institutions to assume their responsibilities in the face of this crisis, and to propose ways of regulating the financial markets.

The world is also faced by another crisis compromising the human right to appropriate and healthy food and this is affecting large swathes of the population. The increase of food prices and oil are at the centre of this crisis.

We must therefore develop a new energy strategy based on the use of renewable and non-polluting sources of energy which do not have a negative effect on hunger in the world. Therefore, we need to look at the impact of our activities on global warming and avoid the polluting activities and lifestyle which are being followed by developing and developed countries at the present time. As well as look-

ing at the links between these activities and global warming, we need to identify ecologically unsound elements contained in models of development which result in high levels of pollution and which have been adopted by a number of developed and developing nations.

Our commitment to the future of the planet, means that we must develop good policies and practices that combat global warming and also lead to greater equity between citizens in and between countries, reducing the gap between the rich and the poor, implementing new models of development, financial activity and intellectual property.

I would also like to stress that the right of freedom of association, collective bargaining and fundamental rights contained within the decent work programme is not yet a reality in Latin America. Trade union officials are locked up and many are assassinated, as is the case in Colombia. This is a shameful situation and one which requires a firmer response from this Organization. Murderers still go unpunished in the Brazilian countryside, where trade unionists fighting against slave labour or for better working conditions are still being killed. In many cases the perpetrators escape retribution.

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Mr HASMUKHLAL GAURISHANKER (*Worker, India*)

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO for focusing on the subject of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Democratic principles are not recognized worldwide in a uniform manner. Many countries still have to come to the mainstream of noble principles, like freedom and democracy. Even in countries where the democratic set-up has been enforced through constitutional mechanism, there are sizeable parts of the population who are still not benefiting from the fruits of democracy and the right to freedom of association.

India is the largest democracy in the world. Freedom of association is guaranteed and enforced by a separate labour statute. But the fruits of the statute and the right of association have still not reached about 94 per cent of the working population, who are still unorganized. This is the greatest challenge at present facing the trade unions, as well as the Government in India.

Collective bargaining will be a toothless tool if it does not carry with it a strong weapon like the right to strike. In India, trade unions generally go for strike as a last resort. Statistics reveal that the number of strikes during the last 15 years has come down sharply. Employees in the Government service were also making use of the right to strike to bring the Government to the collective bargaining table. But two years ago, the Supreme Court of India declared that there is no right to strike. This has created a lot of confusion which still remains unsettled by the Government. The right to strike is an inseparable part of effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining and freedom of association.

Globalization has brought a feeling of insecurity in the minds of workers. Job security and wage security are slowly drifting away. There are massive waves of permanent jobs being converted into contract jobs. The organized sector is being downsized and workers are being added to the unorganized sector. Gradually, an explosive situation is emerging in the labour scenario, where the working population may again go back to repeated use of its right to strike.

Contract work and outsourcing is an area where workers are exploited in inhuman working conditions. The present law applicable to this subject, the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970, is inadequate to recognize the gravity of the problem or to meet the challenges posed by it. The tragic plight of contract workers is worsened still by the advent of labour law reforms since the 1990s.

The reformists strongly advocate and pressurize the Government to legislate progressive contractualization of regular jobs. The employers prefer the contract labour system because of two main reasons: they can offer lower wages; and they can get rid of the worker at any time. This is based on the doctrine of sheer exploitation. Some of the exploitative advantages of contractualization for employers include: non-payment of a proper wage or low wages; no requirement to pay allowances, fringe benefits and other benefits; no contribution to social security measures like EPF and ESA; easy dispensability by termination of contract; unspecified workload and working hours; absence of trade unions; squeezing workers to the maximum under force, coercion and fear of insecurity; and minimum litigation.

Hence, the direction should be to do away with modern methods of human trafficking in the name of contract labour, as pointed out by the Supreme Court in the Gujarat Electricity Board case. Contract labour and other exploited categories, such as women, badli and casual workers, should be given the wages and all other benefits to which a regular worker is entitled, so that employers will not recruit contract labour for the purpose of monetary gain. Hence, equal wages for contract workers should be substituted by equal wages plus all other benefits.

Finally, the trade unions in India are struggling hard to take the fruits of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining to the 94 per cent of the unorganized working population who are not benefiting under the labour legislation.

For this purpose, we are resorting to unconventional organizational strategies. Only then will the concept of decent work or dignified work reach the heart of the majority of the working population.

The ingredients of decent work, including decent wages, decent service conditions, decent security and decent safety should reach the workers who are at present totally out of its purview. This is the larger dimension of the concept of freedom of association and collective bargaining, especially in the context of the experience in a democratic country like India.

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Mr NAKAJIMA (*Worker, Japan*)

The Report of the Director-General has underlined many challenges that the ILO should identify for a clear polity direction. The Report before us has highlighted and alerted us to current crucial problems relating to increasing globalization. The Director-General rightly pointed out the key areas and the action required making Decent Work a global goal. These key areas and the action are based on four strategic objectives with gender equality as a cross-cut.

To make Decent Work an overriding goal for all economic, social and environmental strategies at all levels requires an understanding among decision-makers that the promotion of the well-balanced and harmonized four strategic objectives with policy coherence is needed.

What do well-balanced and harmonized policies for these strategies mean? What is the driving force behind decent work as a global goal? The answer is clear. Everyone knows that the answer is strong tripartism. I strongly support the idea expressed in the Report that these objectives are indivisible, interdependent and mutually supportive. The failure to promote any one of them will hinder progress made with regard to the others. To optimize their impact, the efforts to promote them should be in line with the strategy for decent work, and be part of global and integrated policy covering all relevant areas of activities. In the event of the failure to achieve these objectives, the consequences would be a direct effect on the lives of workers, which would go far beyond the workers and their family, thus creating social problems and instability.

Let me give you an example of the social problems relating to globalization in Japan. It is reported that there has been more than 30,000 suicides every year for the last ten years. The number of suicides due to excessive overwork in the age groups 30s, 20s and 40s is increasing in order of age group. Also it is reported that mental illness patients are increasing considerably. The cause of this is identified as long-term overwork and stress due to the introduction of the results based evaluation by the authorities. This is true, but I argue otherwise. Actually, public finance for social security has shrunk as a result of a new economic order. Spending cuts on social security generate new social phenomena, such as the so-called “homeless and cyber-coffee-shop sleeper”. As reported, we need the right combination of economic, social and environmental crossroads and this is the way towards sustained growth and also emphasizes the need for the ILO to strengthen capacities through improving human, technical and financial resources in order to play the leadership role among other institutions in achieving global sustainable development.

Let me conclude by saying that the ILO is the unique tripartite organization. Tripartism is the way to balance the democratic voice of society, the regulatory function of the state and the innovative and productive function of the market. Strengthening the ILO’s capacity is the same as strengthening tripartism. I believe that the only key to overcoming the globalization deficiency is through strong tripartism. The Director-General is planning the preparation of the 2010–15 Strategic Policy Framework. I hope that my deliberations can find their place in the future direction of the ILO.

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*Original Russian: Mr KOZIK (Worker, Belarus)*

The Report of the Director-General this year is particularly appropriate and timely as it deals with decent work, rural issues, child labour, skill enhancement, all of these are undoubtedly key issues for us today in the world of work because each and every one of us lives in a way that is connected with these issues and indeed the security of all of us depends upon a proper solution being found to them.

Sad to say, some of the negative trends we see emerging in the world today are indeed having an impact on decent work and we see that there is a crisis situation that is continuing to develop throughout the world and this clearly is having an impact on the priorities selected within the world of work. The way that capital is flowing, the way that inflation is now increasing, the way that labour markets are being trained and distorted, the way that effec-

tive investment is often lacking. All of this is destroying the proper balance that should be struck in this area. As we see it the ILO needs to study all of these problems in greater detail and we need to unify our efforts to work more strongly to ensure that the adverse impacts that they might create are indeed eliminated. I am thinking about abject poverty, inequality, discrimination and child labour.

What we think could be particularly useful in that respect would be look at the practice in Belarus when it comes to establishing stable employment, the way in which we have been able to develop and exploit our natural resources in a way that avoids any kind of discrimination.

If you look at our agricultural sector then of course you are talking about a sector that is particularly important any country today and yet in Belarus we have no unemployment, no exploitation of child labour, we have a very large number of our people living above the minimum wage, we see the GDP is increasing year on year and we see that people are living in ever-greater prosperity. All of these are especially important and they do indeed reflect one of the major aims of this very Conference, what we have achieved I mean. I therefore believe that we should fully support the arguments put forward in the Report that we have all studied and we should also underscore the fact that it is extremely clear that the ILO itself needs to be enhanced and needs to greater focus its approach to certain issues. It seems to me that we have a number of institutional weaknesses within the ILO itself and within its office. For instance, there is a lot of concern about the fact that we do not as yet have any kind of standards relating the way in which some of the committees operate, the Committee on Freedom of Association, the Committee of Experts are to some extent out of control, we do not have any kind of monitoring of them of the way in which they operate in some respects. Unfortunately we do not as yet have a legal basis or proper legal status for some of these committees and this means that there are problems of interpretation that arise. Indeed there are problems of interpretation with some of the provisions of the Constitution itself. A number of experts have decided that some of the provisions of certain ILO Conventions can be interpreted very broadly indeed and they can apply them in certain ways to certain situations, not always in the same way going from one country to another.

We believe, however, that we must uphold the principles and Conventions of the ILO and ensure that each country is allowed to express its view on them. When a particular country decides that it does not wish to participate in most of the ILO fundamental Conventions, then it is somewhat strange that it is allowed to level criticism against other countries which have signed up and are endeavouring to apply them. I am thinking, of course, of the key Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

I can certainly assure you that we in Belarus are extremely interested in enhancing the authority and the capacity of the ILO. We believe that this is particularly important because it will allow us to see proper implementation of Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the ILO.

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*Mr ERDENEBUGAN (Government, Mongolia)*

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Director-General on his Global Report, *Freedom of association in practice: Lessons learned*. The Report

identifies, in a clear and concise manner, a general global picture, key challenges and opportunities for us today in promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining. Mongolia has created an environment conducive to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and has joined the related ILO Conventions.

We are very satisfied that the present Conference addresses the most vital issues, such as the promotion of rural employment to reduce poverty, increasing productivity, skills development and employment growth, and strengthening the ILO's capacity. I should note that two of these items are for Mongolia most urgent, relevant and timely. These items are the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction and skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development.

Over the last four years, the Mongolian economy has grown steadily, with an average rate of 8.7 per cent. As a result, tangible progress was made in the socio-economic development of the country. However, the unemployment has not been abated. Therefore, our first priorities are to create decent work opportunities, to enhance the professional capacities and skills of workers as well as to promote the rural employment and to reduce unemployment.

Despite the fact that the vast territory and sparse population cause some difficulties to the labour market development and workforce distribution in Mongolia, accelerated economic growth has occurred to some degree at regional and rural levels. Moreover, it contributed to the increase in rural employment and poverty reduction.

The Government of Mongolia has developed a regional development concept and has been implementing comprehensive economic and social policies consistent with this concept.

The Government is implementing various measures to develop the economic sectors important to the rural employment policy, such as mining, tourism and agriculture, and is striving to increase the skills and valuation of the workers in these sectors. These measures include the improvement of small business management skills, micro-credits and the provision of professional training.

However, the policies and measures taken by the Government have not yet been able to achieve the expected results. A substantial portion of the rural population cannot benefit from the fruits of economic development. The poverty rate in rural areas was 37 per cent in 2006. In comparison, this is higher than the rate in cities and settled areas, which was 26.6 per cent. In this regard, the debate at the Conference and recommendations to be adopted on rural employment and skills development are instrumental for us to implement a comprehensive policy on the promotion of local development-based employment, strengthen capacities of the employers' and workers' organizations, increase the effectiveness of the social partnership mechanism and implement programmes or projects on improvement of social protection for rural workers.

During the transition period, many factories and enterprises closed their doors in Mongolia and the training system for preparation of professional workers completely collapsed. The number of vocational training schools was reduced by 35 per cent and the number of students plummeted. Today, the restoration of that system requires tremendous time, adequate management, organization and financial means.

Mongolia is aiming at introducing a new kind of vocational training and in this regard the general debate about skills development at this Conference, with a view to adopting recommendations, and the experiences of other countries will certainly facilitate the implementation of this objective.

The fundamental basis for ongoing successful reforms in Mongolia is the labour market development and human resources, which meet market requirements. We therefore consider workers skills improvement one of the top priorities for national development.

The Government of Mongolia successfully cooperates with the International Labour Organization in many areas, such as social protection, labour standards and social health insurance. I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the ILO secretariat, especially to the management teams and staff of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the ILO Office for China and Mongolia in Beijing for the valuable support and assistance they provided to the Government of Mongolia.

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*Original Arabic: Mr AL-SHIKH RADHI (Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Iraq)*

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It is an honour for me to convey the best wishes of the new Prime Minister, Mr Nouri Maliki, and to pass on his very best wishes for the successful conclusion of this Conference, which we hope will enable Iraq to adopt Conventions and become part of the international community, based on peace and social justice.

Our Government has devoted much importance to employment and we have taken steps to restructure this sector, in accordance with Arab and international labour standards.

We have also based our work on the values and traditions giving rise to new forms of work, which will help us come to grips with unemployment despite the challenges – of which everybody is all too aware.

Much attention has been paid to the workers' movement, which has retained its independent right to organize, in accordance with the national vision enabling this movement to achieve its objectives effectively. We have also sought to cover the legislative aspect of this issue, thus paving the way for a democratic attainment of trade union objectives.

In the next few days we shall be taking part in elections in Iraq that will allow us to overcome the trade union monopoly which has made the union movement a prisoner in the past.

Tripartism and social dialogue have enabled our Ministry to work, in a balanced fashion, towards drafting national legislation on labour matters and social protection, thereby also providing all stakeholders with the opportunity of taking part in committees concerning employers' and workers' organizations. This has created an appropriate backdrop for the promotion of democracy.

I would like to pay tribute to the Director-General for the Reports he has submitted to this Conference and for the emphasis he has placed on the development of production and productivity; these are vital preconditions to achieve progress and development.

We shall strive to enhance rural development to overcome the spectre of poverty in these regions.

Large-scale productivity in rural areas is also a means to escape the danger of famine threatening these regions. The food crisis, of course, is taking its toll, and we hope that through the measures we

are taking, we shall be able to overcome poverty and deal with two dangers confronting us: poverty and hunger.

The Government of my country has, over the last few years, been in the process of establishing an effective social protection system. Our national project provides financial coverage for more than 7 million Iraqis in various different social categories – poor and marginalized – with specific needs. We have also a project to grant microcredits to finance business plans, to which we have earmarked financial resources.

There is no doubt that Iraq is witnessing rapid progress following the overcoming of the international terrorist movement. On the basis of the rule of law, we are setting up institutions and devising strategies to disarm militia groups. This has had positive knock-on effects on the lives of citizens and also on the environment, making the latter propitious to both local and international investment. Indeed, the legislation on investment encourages both local and foreign investment.

We call on regional and international companies to invest in technology and tourism, against a backdrop which is going to enable us to increase employment prospects for the young and for women. We might then open up international markets to our local products.

We hope to attract foreign capital and cooperate with the United Nations agencies.

At this point, I would like to thank the Director-General of the ILO and the Director of the Arab Labour Organization, as well as the teams working with both these organizations, who have dedicated their work and their time to the benefit of the workers in my country to enable them to build capacity and to put in place the necessary legislation. We are convinced that these two organizations will continue to support Iraq as it seeks to re-establish its place in the international arena, and also in the Arab and regional arena. We hope that our hopes will be achieved with your help, on the occasion of the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.

We wish to pay our compliments once again to the Director-General who is taking a very close interest in the situation of workers in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories, with a view to defending their fundamental and occupational rights, as well as seeking to put an end to the violence, the blockade, labour discrimination and exploitation.

We also wish to pay tribute to the special mission in the region, and to appeal to the international community to support the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination.

We also call for an end to the practices of the State of Israel which seek to kill civilians, destroy homes, put in place discriminatory policies, build a wall of separation and isolate Gaza. We also call for an end to the racial discrimination which denies much of the Palestinian population the right to a home. Palestinians who represent a significant source of labour. It is for that reason that the Conference is concerned with this issue.

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Mr ATWOLI (*Worker, Kenya*)

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On behalf of the Kenyan workers and on my own behalf, I wish to welcome the Director-General's Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of ILO performance and programme implementation for the 2006–07 biennium.

While the Report is no doubt much longer than previous Reports, it provides a much better picture of the organization of work for the period under review, thus making it more accessible for delegates to offer informed decisions and policy guidance to the Organization.

The continued integration of decent work into the work of multilateral agencies and regional groupings is welcome because it helps spread the gospel to more Members besides bringing on board more resources to help and achieve the agenda goals.

In this regard, the Organization's efforts to achieve greater policy coherence and increase support for the Decent Work Agenda within continental, regional and national development strategies, including improvements in the area of indicators and reporting mechanisms will be critical to the initiative's success.

We note that the bulk of resources for technical cooperation programmes have continued to come from donors as opposed to the regular budget. While this is appreciated, we feel it may not be sustainable in the long run, something which may jeopardize the achievement of the objective.

We also note that, although standards and fundamental principles and rights at work recorded a reduction of funding in the biennium overall, the objective has received more funds, a trend which continued for some time now.

We feel that rising unemployment, income inequality and poverty which have been exacerbated by increased globalization, soaring oil prices and food shortages, call for the Organization to redirect more resources to Strategic Objectives Nos 2 and 4.

Employment creation needs to be made the central objective of macroeconomic policies especially in the so-called developing countries if we are to realize shared and inclusive growth across all those who are involved in the production processes. However, for this to happen, we need to have strong workers' organizations able to influence socioeconomic and governance policies in their countries. This must also be complemented by the existence of developed institutions of social dialogue.

My country has just emerged from the violence following the disputed 2007 elections. While we acknowledge that the flawed electoral process was to blame for the chaos, we know that the main underlying causes of the escalation of violence had to do with widespread inequality, unemployment and poverty among the labour force. These decent work deficits have persisted despite the economy registering an impressive 7 per cent GDP growth in 2007. This phenomenon of imbalanced growth is unacceptable. If we have to build stable and peaceful nations, our experience should serve as an example to others of the need to foster shared and inclusive growth.

Our recently enacted labour laws, whose review was financially and technically supported by the ILO, have gone a long way to engender equity and fairness in labour relations. However, a clique of non-actors in industrial relations, who include, among others, the Law Society of Kenya and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, have taken upon themselves to frustrate the implementation of these law on grounds of alleged constitutional contradictions.

These are merely smokescreens and the fear amongst those opposing the new labour laws is the loss of opportunities for exploiting workers, which

existed under the now repealed laws. It is in this context that we are appealing to the Organization to avail further financial and technical assistance to help and ensure that the implementation of these laws is not derailed by these self-seeking organizations.

In the meantime, we have called on some of our social partners who have also expressed some displeasure with some of the provisions of the laws to follow known channels of dialogue rather than confrontation to address such concerns, this notwithstanding the fact that most of those opposing the laws were fully represented and participated in all stages of the review process.

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Mr LEKHAK (*Government, Minister for Labour and Transport Management, Nepal*)

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My delegation fully concurs with the views and the vision of the Director-General's Report and supports the spirit and the contents outlined therein.

I feel it an honour and a privilege to convey to this august gathering here the warm greetings and the best wishes of the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, for the success of the Conference. Our legendary leader, of strong conviction and commitment from the trade union movement, has guided Nepal's move from an armed conflict lasting over a decade to the peace process, which has created a culture of dialogue and consensus-building in the country. The Constituent Assembly elected on 10 April has been most representative and inclusive. The Assembly met on 28 May and declared the country a republic. This provides a rare example of bringing about such a great revolutionary change in a peaceful and dignified manner through an electoral process.

Nepal believes in the fundamental principles of the ILO and reiterates its deep commitment to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We have ratified seven ILO Conventions, including Convention No. 169. The interim constitution of Nepal guarantees freedom to every citizen to form unions and associations and to practise all professions or carry on any occupation. Government officials enjoy trade union rights up to the official level as part of a recent amendment of the Civil Service Act.

Nepal is currently engaged in the process of labour market reform that includes institutional and legal reforms associated with welfare and protection of labour. Policies for HIV/AIDS in the workplace have also been implemented. Nepal remains committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour and unfair labour practices and to ensure decent work and gender equality in terms of freedom and dignity.

Globalization has transformed our societies beyond belief. Two major drivers of globalization have been the free flow of capital and transfer of technology. Where these are not possible, the free flow of labour brings about the same change and helps make globalization fair and inclusive. Migration not only connects us all but also enables constructive cooperation between the countries of origin and destination, and contributes towards poverty eradication. We need to devise measures to protect the interests of migrant workers, to ensure provisions for the protection of their health and respect for basic rights in order to maximize the benefits at both ends.

Nepal expresses its appreciation and gratitude for the strong and steadfast support from the international community, including the ILO, in the process of democratic transition. We look forward to an enhanced level of support and assistance from the international community in our efforts to address root causes of conflict, institutionalize peace and a democratic attitude and behaviour. This will pave the way to make peace, stability, democracy and development sustainable in Nepal and contribute to global security and prosperity.

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Ms DEL RIO (*Worker, Italy*)

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This year, the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work entitled *Freedom of association in practice: Lessons learned*, deals with freedom of association and collective bargaining, two fundamental enabling rights which cannot and should not be considered separately, which make it possible to promote democracy, sound labour market governance, decent conditions at work and good industrial relations, and which provide a basis for a fair globalization.

Unfortunately, as underlined in the Report, 55 per cent of workers in several countries, including in big ones, are excluded from the enjoyment of these rights. Furthermore, we observe persistent violations of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 by many member States which have ratified these Conventions.

Despite the significant number of ratifications of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, we still have a long way to go. The ambitious objective to reach a universal ratification of the eight core Conventions by 2015 must be a shared commitment.

A major effort is needed by Governments, by social partners and by the ILO to adopt and implement a plan of action in line with the proposals of the Director-General's Report.

We cannot delay the ratification of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 and the other core Conventions by major economies and countries, Members of the ILO and even members of the Governing Body.

The Decent Work Agenda is the ILO's key strategic challenge, but the Italian trade union confederations – CGIL, CISL and UIL – would like briefly to underline the following points: first, the need to stress the interdependence among the four objectives in the national plans of action; second, international labour standards have to be considered a mandatory component of Decent Work Country Programmes; third, ILO technical cooperation programmes, in order to meet the four strategic objectives, should involve social partners at the local level and at the level of donor countries in the project definition and implementation stages; fourth, a cyclical revision also of the coherent work of the Office is needed, without imbalances in the distribution of funds among the sectors; fifth, above all, employment programmes have to be based on and rooted in ILO priorities; and sixth, the International Training Centre of the ILO should be fully integrated into the ILO activities.

A final remark on the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which will hopefully be approved this week by the Conference. The Declaration underlines the leading role of the ILO in the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and gives clear guidance to the Office and member States.

It should not be considered just a strong political message. It is an instrument to strengthen the mandate and the efficiency of the ILO in responding to the needs of member States in order to set up a national strategy plan for decent work. But we think that the ILO's regular budget should be revised in order to guarantee adequate means to implement the Declaration and its follow-up.

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*Original French: Mr BERTHE (Minister of Labour, Public Services and State Reform, Mali)*

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The Government of Mali notes with satisfaction the efforts undertaken by the International Labour Office to place decent work at the heart of the economic and social development policies of the Members of the ILO in general and Africa in particular.

The support which the ILO is continuing to provide under the follow-up of the Recommendations of the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Employment and the Fight against Poverty held in Ouagadougou in September 2004 is a concrete sign of the ILO's commitment to help the African continent make decent work a reality.

This summit led to the adoption of a Decent Work Agenda for Africa. Thus, it translates into reality the willingness of Africans to reverse the current trend of poverty, unemployment and underemployment.

Obtaining and exercising productive employment in conditions of dignity, security and freedom represents the best means of achieving sustainable growth. This approach will, no doubt, make it possible to implement policies conducive to the creation of more and better-quality employment and to thus break the vicious circle of poverty.

Strengthened by this conviction, my country has decided, under the impetus of the highest authorities and with the support of the ILO, to organize between now and the end of the year, an international forum on decent work, bringing together all potential players in the labour world.

Developing countries such as mine are currently faced with multiple challenges. That is why the delegation of Mali is happy to note, over and above the Report of the Director-General, the inclusion on this session's agenda two major items: the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction; and professional skills for improving productivity, employment growth and development.

For the Government of Mali, employment – in particular that of the young rural population – is instrumental for peace and development in the country. That is why, in 2003, the Government adopted a policy declaration on youth employment and introduced a major economic integration programme with a special focus on developing rural employment.

Aware of the importance of combating unemployment and underemployment in the present situation, and in the light of the recommendations of the Ouagadougou summit and the appeal launched by African youth at the French–African meeting held in Bamako in December 2005, my country has decided to focus its action in the years to come on the promotion of decent work for young men and women with an eye to fighting poverty.

With regard to upgrading human resources, Mali is convinced that the key to economic and social development lies in individual skills and qualifications and thus in investment in education and training.

Before concluding, allow me to greet and to welcome the State of Tuvalu as a new Member of our Organization and to ensure it of our full cooperation.

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Mr REDFERN (*Government, Kiribati*)

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The Government of Kiribati welcomes the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2008, and agrees with the observations made in the Report that while there are still infringements of such rights, there is, indeed, a wider recognition of civil liberties, including the rights of workers and employers to organize and to engage in collective bargaining to regulate the terms and conditions of service.

Kiribati is committed to the promotion and application of the fundamental principles and rights at the workplace that respect freedom of association and collective bargaining; to this effect, it has ratified the ILO core Convention No. 87, as well as Conventions Nos 29, 98 and 105. Furthermore, Kiribati has very recently enacted amendments to its labour laws which now pave the way to the ratification of the four remaining Conventions in the very near future.

The harmonization of our national laws with international labour standards is the first step towards the full realization of this objective. The next important step is to put into operation these new laws, which at the moment is difficult as there is lack of capacity at the national level. The support of the ILO in providing technical assistance and training in this area is therefore requested in order to build the capacities of the constituents.

The importance of skills training and development for improved productivity, employment growth and development is well understood. It is imperative that skills development should be responsive and able to assist in managing global drivers of change, such as technology, trade and climate change. Skills training and development would be expected to improve the employability of the workers, by training a workforce that is versatile and adaptable to changes caused by these global drivers of change.

Kiribati sees climate change, and sea-level rise in particular, to be the number one phenomenon threatening the livelihood of its citizens and, worst of all, its existence as a nation. From scientific evidence now available, it seems inevitable that these phenomena will come true one day in the future and that our people will have to be relocated to bigger countries. As part of this adaptation programme, the Government of Kiribati is now giving top priority to the training and retraining of our workers and unemployed youth, to a skill and a competency level that would allow them easy access to regional and global labour markets.

Given the limited employment opportunities available domestically, and the threat of sea-level rise, the Government has to focus on off shore employment as a priority in its employment policy. A few pilot initiatives with our development donor partners have already begun, which allow our unemployed youths and workers to be trained or retrained to fill in labour shortages in certain industries in the donor country on a seasonal or contractual basis, with the possibility of gaining permanent resident status in that country. We will pursue this policy with our other partners.

This arrangement would allow our workers the opportunity to be exposed and to adapt to different working environments, which in the long term would help them to relocate with ease and be able to contribute to the economy of the host country, rather than to face the hardships of being economic refugees.

The Government of Kiribati wishes to request the ILO to give priority consideration to the development of skills training programmes that go beyond the ongoing youth skills training programme for self-employment. Kiribati would favour a more strategic approach, in line with national priorities, that focuses on skills development allowing for greater worker mobility, employability, adaptability and productivity to respond to the impact of climate change.

*(Mr Tabani takes the Chair.)*

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*Original Spanish: Ms VERA VELEZ (Employer, Ecuador)*

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Representing the employers of Ecuador, we are pleased with the important proposal made in the Report of the Director-General which sets out important ideas about the work dynamic in its different forms.

Like other countries, Ecuador is not untouched by the changes in the world of work. Over recent years, our legislation has achieved progress particularly as regards strengthening tripartitism, social dialogue and consultation. For example, the National Wage Council, the National Council for Vocational Training, tripartite integration in social security and the creation, in 2004, of the National Labour Council, have all aimed at ensuring active participation of employers and workers in adopting fundamental decisions in the world of work.

Regrettably, on the pretext of ensuring greater respect of labour law, at the present time the country is faced constantly by a revision of labour legislation, severely undermining harmony and peace in the workplace. This delicate situation has been made worse by the present discussion of a new Constitution, which revises current provisions in the labour area and puts forward supposedly more advanced social provisions.

The Employers are very concerned about the imposition of a minimum wage, which is not based on technical criteria or legal provisions, exclusively on the basis of projected inflation for the year in question.

We are also concerned about official statements on government intervention in social security institutes because they are going to use the resources of the pension fund for dangerous public investments, but also they are going to jeopardize the future pensions of the retired persons, given the fact that that fund will be used for other purposes.

Without consulting the National Labour Council, the Constituent Assembly and the Government have pushed through a law repealing a law on subcontracting, which was agreed in 2006 and supported by the ILO Regional Office in Lima. The employers have now been obliged to take on board workers who were previously subcontracted. Also, specialized outsourcing enterprises have been banned from contracting for complementary services, thus causing great concern to undertakings and also workers, and is having a negative effect on production. The warnings of the different sectors in the community were not heeded and the idea was to respond to

election promises and meet the demands of those who seek to promote conflict.

We are also concerned by the new constitutional framework in the area of work. This contains rhetoric which has little to do with the need for effective standards aimed at promoting decent work and generating economic activities, as proposed by the ILO and its Director-General.

Also we have the problem of the minimum wage, which is supposed to be the same as the family shopping basket. This is totally impractical and will mean not only that companies be unable to comply with the requirements, but there could be serious social disorder. In fact, this proposal could become a dangerous weapon.

We would like to state as employers that we will do everything possible to avoid clashes and to promote tripartite dialogue to revive the creation of employment. In due course, we will provide the ILO with more details of the situation in Ecuador at the present time.

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*Mr RADUNOVIĆ (Minister of Health, Labour and Social Welfare, Montenegro)*

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Montenegro is a small country in terms of territory, but a country with serious ambitions, committed to the fulfilment of its planned goals and accepted obligations, and a reliable country when it comes to observance of the instruments and standards of the International Labour Organization. In this respect, Montenegro has been very active in recent years, and especially in the period 2003–04.

An important contribution in this respect is made by the project on the reform of the labour market and labour force development, the implementation of which started in November 2006, financed by the European Union and implemented through the European Agency for Reconstruction. The project will end, and we can already say successfully, in September of this year.

It is my pleasure to emphasize several strategic documents that were developed within this project in cooperation with experts from the European Union and the relevant institutions in consultation with the social partners.

First of all, I wish to mention the draft National Strategy of Employment and Human Resource Development for the period 2008–11. This is currently going through government procedures and should be adopted by the end of this quarter. The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the guidelines of the Lisbon Employment Strategy and also observes requirements defined in other EU regulations. It consists of three priorities supported by a set of detailed goals, and through their implementation we should attain the defined indicators by 2011.

The CARDS Project experts assisted us in the preparation of the Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning, and its goals until 2013 would provide for greater employability of all population groups, including those groups with greatest difficulties in finding employment, and would increase the proportion of self-employment in the overall economy.

In addition, the White Book for Human Resource Development in Montenegro by 2017 defines the “road map” that Montenegro must follow if it wishes by 2017 not only to have the labour force that will be capable of meeting national needs with its skills and knowledge, but also to have a labour

force that is fully competitive in the international market. In that sense, a significant contribution to these processes and achievements will be given by the Law on National Professional Qualifications to be adopted for the first time in Montenegro.

The labour force survey has been significantly improved and harmonized with EU Eurostat standards. The surveys will be undertaken weekly, with a sample of over 3,000 interviewees, and the results will be published each quarter. It will thus be possible to monitor labour market trends in a more reliable and efficient manner. In addition, the Parliament of Montenegro has adopted a new Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners, which will be implemented as of 1 January 2009. The law is harmonized with the relevant European legislation. The manner and procedure for issuing work permits for foreigners, according to the new law, will be regulated in by-laws, and on that basis, foreigners will be subject to a simple and well-known procedure for the issuance of work permits. The law defines three types of work permit: personal work permits, employment permits, and work permits, and in this way it will be possible to monitor specifically trends in the employment of foreigners, the duration of their professional engagement and other details.

In the previous period, the Law on Employment was changed, in the provisions relating to the right to financial compensation, for instance. Financial compensation will be increased for persons of 60 years of age and above for men, and 55 years of age and above for women, with a minimum of ten years' service, as well as for persons with 30 years of service who are at least 50 years of age.

The Law on the Employment of the Disabled, which exists currently as a first draft, will regulate the procedure for professional rehabilitation in order to bring about faster employment of these persons. It will define the quota system for mandatory employment, and regulate the process of establishment and work of special organizations for the training and employment of persons with serious disabilities.

Reform processes are also taking place in the field of labour legislation. The proposed new Labour Law is already going through parliament, and its provisions are based on international standards in the field of labour relations, primarily, those contained in ratified ILO Conventions, as well as those in the text of the EC Social Charter. The new Labour Law will introduce in our legislation, and define in more detail, a prohibition of discrimination and provisions for equal treatment in employment of men and women, as well as in the selection of occupation. The Law will ensure consistent implementation with the ratified ILO Conventions and Recommendations, and is harmonized with the key directives and guidelines in this area.

Within the reform of its labour legislation, Montenegro has agreed to strengthen social dialogue and tripartism as instruments of democracy, participation and the right to work based on the positive experience of the European Social and Economic Committee, the long experience of EU Member States regarding the legal status, responsibilities and manner of work of the national economic and social councils, and the effect of the work of those bodies on the development of social dialogue.

Another positive development in Montenegro's legislation is the adoption of the Law on the Peaceful Resolution of Labour Disputes adopted in De-

ember 2007, which introduced for the first time in Montenegro the concept of out-of-court settlement of disputes. The basic concept and content of this law focuses on the definition of the basic principles of the procedure for a peaceful resolution of collective and individual labour disputes.

Although the Social and Economic Council has been established, thanks to a government decision in 2001, that is, through amendment of the decision of December 2006, the work of this Council has been regulated for the first time through the Law on the social council adopted in December last year.

The main goal of the operation of that Council is to contribute to the creation of basic prerequisites for substantive and efficient social dialogue in Montenegro at national and local levels. These include: improvement of democracy, fighting against the grey economy, competitiveness of the economy and its sustainable development, creation of a stable macroeconomic environment, encouraging consensus among social partners regarding fundamental economic and social policy and long-term objectives, and full economic and social development of the country and EU integration.

I also wish to emphasize that, in order to promote regional cooperation in the field of employment and social policy within the Bucharest Process, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare has organized and hosted the Third Ministerial Conference on Employment and Social Policy in South-East Europe. This was held in Budva on 25–26 October 2007. Participants were ministers and their deputies from countries of South-East Europe, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the highest representatives of the international community.

I would also emphasize that reforms undertaken so far and activities implemented in these areas have allowed us to achieve the following: GDP per capita of 3,443 euros in 2006, with an annual growth rate in prices of 8.6 per cent in 2006; total active population in Montenegro of 264,000, of which women represent 42.9 per cent; registered unemployment rate of 11.36 per cent as of 19 May 2008.

A strong inflow of non-residents from the surrounding countries was observed in the period 1 January to 19 May 2008. The right to employment in Montenegro was exercised by 22,241 persons, an increase of 72.18 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Regular meetings of the social council and planned changes to the Law on strikes have contributed to better cooperation with the social partners and the increased level of bargaining culture and tripartite dialogue. Besides this, there has been an increase in investments on the part of all stakeholders in the development of human resources through employers' institutions, NGOs and others. The results that Montenegro attained in the dynamic process of implementing demographic reforms, a process that has now been under way for many years, especially in the fields of strengthening the rule of law, respect for human rights and minority rights, is something of which we are very proud.

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Mr WILLIAMS (*Government, Saint Kitts and Nevis*)

Our participation in this year's Conference is indeed not only memorable, but historic, as it signals the first time that a tripartite delegation from my Federation is represented in this august body. In-

deed, notwithstanding our resource limitations, we have not renege on our commitment to participate in this year's Conference, and I would dare say that it is quite a rewarding experience.

I was somewhat alarmed that my small country is unknown to some of you who have not yet had the opportunity to visit. Saint Kitts and Nevis is a twin-island state, with a population of approximately 50,000 people and the size of 100 square miles. We have been an independent State since 1983, a member of the Commonwealth, and are celebrating our Silver Jubilee, the 25th anniversary of independence, this coming September.

The Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Denzil Douglas, is one of the longest serving heads of State in the Caribbean region. We also have a Governor General, who represents Her Majesty, the Queen. It is no small accomplishment that, despite our small size, we have a literacy rate of over 90 per cent and enjoy a political and social stability that augurs well for sustained growth and development.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is not rich in natural wealth. Our most important resource is our people. Our Government firmly believes that the economic success of the Federation strongly depends on meaningful dialogue with our social partners and tripartism between the Government, Employers and Workers. We wish to extend our most profound gratitude to the ILO for the assistance and contribution rendered over the years to the Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. In particular, to the Ministry of Labour, in its ongoing efforts to enhance the capacity of the Government to deliver its industrial relations mandate.

I must record our profound appreciation to Dr Ana Theresa Romero and her team at the ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean for the assistance given to the region in strengthening our efforts at enhancing the requisite standard of engagement in fulfilling our obligations.

Despite our economic challenges, Saint Kitts and Nevis continues to demonstrate the right political will, in view of its commitment to the Decent Work Agenda, which is a major thrust of the ILO.

Saint Kitts and Nevis joined the ILO in 1996, when it became the 174th Member. Since then, the Federation has ratified the eight fundamental Conventions and one priority Convention, the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). This is ample testimony to the emphasis placed on the enhancement of the industrial relations space in the Caribbean and the Federation.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis remains ever mindful and cognisant of the myriad issues that impact the world of work and workers. Issues which have been exacerbated by the changing trends in the global labour market. It is against this background that the Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with various institutions, such as the ILO, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), for example, is aggressively seeking to move the Decent Work Agenda forward. The principles of social dialogue and partnership, and the rights of the workers are held as sacrosanct by the Government and serve as beacons of light, guiding us forward through the global turbulences in the world of work, where respect for workers' rights is of the utmost priority.

However, this is not without significant difficulties. Indeed our country is in a state of economic transition as we have been fighting to recover, for the past three years, from the severe economic shocks caused by the closure of the sugar industry, after an operational period of over 300 years as the mainstay of our economy. The Government was advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to close the industry, as it was causing the Federation to amass a large fiscal debt. However, when the Government balanced this advice against the socio-economic impact that the closure would have, bearing in mind that this would swell the ranks of the unemployed by over 1,000 persons, a delay period was implemented. In 2005, however, the decision was made to close the sugar industry, which employed a significant portion of the work force.

The aftermath. Once the sugar industry was closed, the Government had to find solutions for alleviating the economic difficulties caused to the redundant workers. The Government set its eye towards various economic frameworks, including establishing a service-driven economy, led by information technology, finance and the tourist industry, now the largest industry in the Federation.

The Government embarked upon a number of initiatives, targeting the former employees in the sugar industry, such as worker re-education and training, as well as the creation of investment opportunities, all with a view to facilitate their reintegration into the world of work.

Some persons were allocated land to pursue animal husbandry and vegetable and fruit production. Contacts were also made with cruise ships to purchase some of the local produce. Other persons were channelled into the construction industry, while others were given training in developing entrepreneurial skills to enable them to set up small businesses to produce, for example, craftwork, jams, sauces and preserves.

Another group found work in the clothing and electronics industries. However, while we have come a long way, there is still much more to be done and unity must be the operative word in the ongoing process.

In closing, I must reiterate that Saint Kitts and Nevis is committed to the principle of sustainable development by using the ILO mechanisms to promote and create decent work for our population via tripartite negotiations between workers, employers and our Government. Our Government has tried hard to create social dialogue and strong social networks, so as to assist the population in dealing with the uncharted and challenging journey to a social and economic transformation.

We appeal to the ILO to assist us in every possible way, as we endeavour to draw on our limited resources in building capacity among the most vulnerable sectors of society to promote and sustain their socio-economic growth and development.

I speak particularly of our youth and our women-folk and the Government's priorities of creating greater employment opportunities and developing basic entrepreneurial skills among these social groups. We must never lose sight of the fact that the legacy one creates now will become the catalyst of tomorrow's world, which our youth will inherit.

I am humbled by this very important occasion to present my country's response to the two Reports of the Director-General – a response of support and commitment to the role of the ILO in the world today. On behalf of my delegation, the Government of Papua New Guinea and the country's 6 million inhabitants, it is with great pleasure that I convey my Government's acknowledgement of and support for the two well-documented and comprehensive Reports.

The ILO, under the stewardship of the Director-General, has once again proved its efficiency and ability by presenting Reports that are of real inspiration to all people in all walks of life, which present indications of the reality of the world of work today for the achievement of the fundamental principles and rights.

The issues raised in these Reports indicate real challenges and tasks that we need to address for our sustainability and well-being in this globalized world. Whilst we can take comfort in some aspects of these issues, the challenges will remain, for as long as the world continues to change.

Allow me to express my country's great satisfaction with and commendation of the Director-General and the Governing Body of the ILO for selecting freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining as the theme and focus of the Conference this year.

My Government concurs with other countries that the ILO has laid down the challenge for countries and constituents to address. In response to the challenges outlined in the Global Reports, with specific focus on these rights, my Government is planning activities relating to the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, to address the shortcomings of the elements of these principles, while attempting to forge a greater realization of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining as an important and pivotal tool for nation building, economic growth and sustainability of our way of life.

My Government has ratified 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), which give effect to these fundamental principles and rights. Not only have we ratified these Conventions, we have also supported mechanisms and practices to bring into effect these basic principles and rights at work at the national level, for example through the Government's strengthening of the ILO's national Decent Work Country Programme.

The current review and amendment of the Industrial Relations Act, which will now incorporate other pieces of legislation, including the Industrial Relations Act, the Industrial Organizations Act and the Industrial Arbitration and Tribunal Acts, with technical assistance from the ILO and funding from the Government, indicates the importance placed on making collective bargaining and freedom of association fundamental pillars for strong and vibrant industrial relations machinery in the country.

The intended review of the Employment Act, with assistance from the Australian Government, adds to the emphasis placed by my Government on modern-

izing the labour laws and practices that best serve, protect and promote the fundamental rights of its people.

Allow me also to make mention of the Report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body, which is welcomed by my Government as it has placed further emphasis on the Decent Work Agenda as the ILO's official agenda for change today. Being a developing nation, my country has realized the importance of decent work and is making efforts to promote the Decent Work Agenda as the cornerstone for growth and development of its economy.

Papua New Guinea has recently formulated and firmed up its ILO Decent Work Country Programme, with assistance from an ILO multi-purpose mission in mid-May 2008, these programmes are the main vehicle for the ILO to mainstream its global issues and better still, to find a place for them in the national Government policies.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations in heeding on the ILO's call to promote decent work at the national level, has developed a National Decent Work Policy, which will now be channelled into the Government's mainstream Medium-term Development Strategy (MTDS) for 2005–10, to bring about the Government's concrete commitment on the labour and social front, whilst at the same time enabling the ILO's Decent Work Agenda to filter into the core of the Government's decision-making processes and society as a whole.

We see the Decent Work Agenda as a practical and achievable agenda because of the paramount significance it places on humanity and society. Given the challenges of addressing poverty and creating employment in the Government's MTDS, the Decent Work Policy will be used as a tool to enhance and promote employment and reduce poverty, whilst at the same time allowing for decent and productive work to be realized in the country.

I must state here that, given the stability of the Government, the increased foreign investment in the country and the general growth of the economy, we are certain to experience sporadic cases of uneasiness on the labour and social front, but that is what the Government, through its decent work policy, will address. This is our commitment, the commitment of the Government of Papua New Guinea, to ensure that decent work is achieved over time, for the country. The strong and vibrant tripartite spirit in the country has also given further incentive to address all decent work issues through concerted efforts by all parties.

The ILO Decent Work Country Programme will be boosted through national government support and the partnership we have forged is welcomed with open arms by my Government. We will do what we can with our means to ensure the objectives of the ILO are achieved by our Government for the nation and its people.

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*Original French: Mr MACKOUZANGBA (Minister of Civil Service, Labour, Social Security and Youth Employment, Central African Republic)*

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I have just been promoted to the post of Minister in charge of Labour of the Central African Republic and it is with great pleasure that I take the floor for the first time before this august assembly in order to renew the commitment of my country to the life of our common Organization.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt congratulations to the Director-General of the ILO and his collaborators for the remarkable efforts they have been deploying in realizing the objectives of the ILO and for the excellent nature of the Report drafted this year on freedom of association and recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

My country has ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), as well as the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Both were ratified on 9 November 1964 and the provisions of these Conventions have been inserted in my country's legislative and regulatory texts.

We are a young democracy trying to ensure that rights are respected. The task is not easy but the political will is there and that is what matters.

To give you an example, a trade union organization has just been created, which brings the number of recognized trade unions to seven. Furthermore, the social partners are involved in all the decision-making bodies of the State, including most governing boards of companies and public offices.

The Government has recognized the legitimacy of the strike called in the public sector with regard to the backlog of wages and the lifting of the freeze on the financial effects of promotion in the civil service. It has strived to resolve the problems relating to that dispute through the strengthening of social dialogue, convinced that this is the only way to meet the many challenges we face today. Thus a joint technical committee comprised of the representatives of the trade unions has been set up by a decree of the Prime Minister.

The process of strengthening of social dialogue is taking place through the appointment of the members of the newly created Permanent National Labour Council, which will be a real asset for renegotiation in the private sector of collective agreements and other company agreements which are currently out of touch with current economic and social realities.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that our draft new labour code, currently being discussed at the National Assembly with a view to its definitive adoption, has taken into account the observations of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations on all Conventions ratified, in particular the fundamental Conventions.

The Central African Republic Government, in accordance with the Declaration of the African Heads of State at the Ouagadougou Summit, has agreed on a plan of action for the fight against poverty, reflected in the National Poverty Reduction Plan (DSRP) for 2008–2010, which was adopted by the international community at a round table held in Brussels in October 2007.

The holding of an international employment and vocational training forum has got a good place in this plan of action. The terms of reference of this forum have been agreed with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and we hope that the ILO will provide its technical support to the organization of this very important event.

Furthermore, I am very satisfied to convey to you the fact that the national study on violence linked to decent work, conducted in partnership with

UNICEF has been completed and is awaiting validation.

With regard to social security, this is undergoing restructuring and adjustment. Following the enactment of two laws on the Social Security Code and the creation of the National Social Security Fund, implementation texts are currently being drafted with the active participation of the social partners and the effective involvement of the Inter-African Conference on Social Security (CIPRES).

I would like to emphasize how much our Government welcomed the technical cooperation and assistance of the ILO with regard to the implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work through the PAMODEC project and, furthermore, with regard to the project to support the updating of the Labor Administration and Inspectorate (ADMITRA). The report of the national PAMODEC consultant is being finalized, while the ADMITRA tripartite working group has been set up and an action plan agreed upon in March 2008.

The Central African Government is very sensitive and committed to the role of the ILO in matters pertaining to technical cooperation and its policy of active partnership to promote decent work. It is indispensable to a country such as mine which, after many years of military and political troubles, has been trying since 2003 to rebuild its economic fabric and re-establish social cohesion, to improve security and reduce poverty reduction.

But our efforts will be in vain if we are not supported by the international community. That is why I would like to take this opportunity to launch an urgent appeal to the countries present here to strengthen the action of the ILO towards our country and help to realize the priority objectives to which our Government is committed.

I would like to thank and pay tribute to the Swiss people, particularly the population of the Canton of Geneva for their warm welcome and hospitality as we meet together to promote social justice in the world.

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Mr AKOMEA (*Minister for Manpower, Youth and Employment, Ghana*)

Ghana joined the ILO immediately after it became the first sub-Saharan country to gain independence. I am sure that Ghana is the oldest member of the ILO in sub-Saharan Africa and I am happy to note that, in this long period of association with the ILO, Ghana has benefited greatly and we appreciate the technical assistance and the guidance that the ILO has provided during these long years of membership.

In the last 50 years or so since we joined the ILO, the partnership between the Government and labour in Ghana has had its ups and downs. Indeed right after independence the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) was actually set up as an arm of the Government and therefore a wing of the political party in power at that time.

When the Government was changed after ten years, the high politicization of the Trade Union Congress caused a negative reaction and when the Government changed the Ghana Trade Union Congress was actually banned. That was the relationship between the Trade Union Congress and the Government in the early years of independence. I am, however, happy to note that in the last 20 years or so the relationship between labour and the Govern-

ment has been characterized by freedom of association, consultation, collaboration and cooperation among the social partners in Ghana, especially the Government and labour.

Since 2003, we have concretized industrial relations in law. In 2003, the Parliament of Ghana codified all the various acts and decrees that affect industrial relations into one Act of parliament that became known as the Labour Law 2003, Act of Parliament 651. This Act provides the country with a solid infrastructure for managing labour relations and we hope that, with the cooperation of the ILO, this solid infrastructure will carry us into the next period and ensure industrial harmony in our country.

The first element of this infrastructure is what we call the Single Spine Pay System. The Single Spine Pay System involves job evaluation, job analysis, job grading and subsequent placements within a unified structure. The ultimate aim is to achieve equal work for equal pay.

The second element of this infrastructure is the setting up of a commission called the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission. This Commission is an independent body whose job is to maintain and assure that the administration of salaries, especially salary adjustments, salary reviews and so on, is done with reference to a unified structure, which is a single spine, so that relativities are maintained and no class of worker is disadvantaged.

This single-spine structure will become operational in 2009. The Fair Wages Commission will administer this single spine and is already in place.

The third element of the infrastructure is what we call the National Labour Commission. We recognize that no matter the structure that we put in place, disputes and disagreements over salary administration, especially early on, will arise. The National Labour Commission is an independent body, to address disputes, using the tools of arbitration, adjudication and mediation with the law courts coming in only as a last resort.

The fourth important element of this infrastructure is the National Tripartite Committee, which has also been set up under the Labour Law. The Committee provides a platform for labour, employers and governments, to deliberate on the daily minimum wage and also to serve as a platform for dialogue on issues of productivity, standards, wages and labour markets.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of the tripartite partners in fostering a conducive atmosphere in Ghana. I would like to acknowledge the presence of Mr Adu-Amankwah and Mr Asamoah, who have led a strong team of the Ghana TUC at this Conference and also the presence of Ms Anang, who has led a strong team of the Ghana Employers' Association to this meeting.

We recognize in Ghana that the issue of child labour is of great concern to the ILO. Indeed, the ILO has been engaged in Ghana in a national programme for the elimination of child labour. We, as a country, are making progress in this direction and we are grateful to the ILO. There is one particular issue of child labour that is of specific interest to Ghana. This is the issue of child labour in the production of the cocoa crop.

We are all familiar with the pioneering efforts of United States Senator Harkin and Congressman Engel in highlighting the campaign against the use of child labour in the production of cocoa. Even

though Ghana was not a subject of their study, Ghana has been keen to ensure that cocoa is produced within acceptable labour standards and conditions because cocoa is such a major crop. We have, therefore, engaged the two legislators from the United States, and have invited them to Ghana to take them onto cocoa farms to study labour practices. We are happy to note that Ghana is on the right side of the effort to eliminate and prevent the worst forms of child labour in cocoa production.

The issue of child labour in cocoa production, raises another issue of interest to Ghana: the issue of definition. It can sometimes be problematic when definitions are given, especially in the West, without regard to the social and economic conditions in other parts of the world. In a lot of the world, it would be quite ordinary for children to scrub and clean their classrooms at the end of the month but under a different definition, it could be regarded as child labour and inferred that it is a way of instilling responsibility in children. International definitions that define situations across countries should be done after thorough international consultations.

I cannot end without extending our gratitude to the ILO for the immense technical assistance the ILO has given Ghana, especially in the decent work programme, the national plan of action to eliminate worst forms of child labour and the cash transfer programme to poor people. All have been implemented in Ghana with active support of the ILO. We shall continue to cooperate with the ILO, to improve the employment conditions of workers in our country and find opportunities for social dialogue and harmony in Ghana.

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Mr RAHMAN (*Employer, Bangladesh*)

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At the outset, on behalf of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation, I express my deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the Director-General for his Reports, particularly the Report entitled *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*. The Report covers important and strategic issues concerning international cooperation for decent work, Decent Work Country Programmes, regional developments, continuing to improve policy coherence along with strategic objectives in relation to inequality and financial crises. The Report is an all-inclusive programme for social development.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to inform this house that Bangladesh was one of one of the first eight countries that participated in the Decent Work Pilot Programme. The core issues of the national pilot programme, which were identified after several rounds of consultations amongst the social partners and the ILO, were globalization and decent work. The concern was how globalization could be better managed and harnessed by Bangladesh, as well as other least developed countries, in order to maximize benefits, promote decent work, and at the same time minimize social and economic costs.

The economy of Bangladesh grew rapidly during the 1990s, as the country embarked on a policy of liberalization of its markets and became increasingly integrated into the world economy. The private sector led national policy reforms and development programmes during the last decade increased opportunities for Bangladesh's economy to be engaged with the global economy, enabling growth and the employment generation. The noticeable development is, perhaps, best exemplified by the phenomenal rise of the export-oriented garment

industry. However, globalization also offers considerable uncertainties, risks and vulnerability to external shocks, which the least developed countries like Bangladesh are not yet capable to withstand.

Globalization coupled with economic liberalization has contributed to increasing social and territorial inequalities in many countries resulting in social exclusion in many cases. The uncertainties arising from several internal and external factors have pushed the least developed countries into deeper crises. The failure to forecast worldwide food crises and record high oil prices simultaneously has pushed the LDCs into a critical situation. This has not only increased the cost of living but also severely affected competitiveness while operating in the global market. Least developed countries with lesser capabilities need to be assisted with sufficient research and evaluation mechanisms in order to correctly assess the future challenges so that they can prepare and realign themselves with the global economy.

The impact of global warming and climate change is already challenging the development aspirations of many least developed countries. Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters and the adverse effects of climate change. Rapid global warming resulting from unplanned industrialization primarily by the developed nations has brought fundamental changes to our environment. In Bangladesh alone, the rise in sea level in the coming decades will push over 25 million people to become environmental refugees. We urge the ILO and the global community to address this issue with all seriousness so that as a nation we can become resilient rather than vulnerable to climate change.

Another issue of due importance is that of the free movement of temporary workers across borders. Workers' remittances play an important role in many of the least developed countries. We seek strong support from the ILO and other distinguished governments, particularly from the developed world, to look into this issue during the WTO's "Trade in services" negotiations in the near future.

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*Original Spanish: Mr LOLI VENTOCILLA (Worker, Peru)*

This is a fine opportunity to express my greetings on behalf of the General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP), and welcome the decision of the ILO to place on the agenda of this 97th Session the promotion of rural employment, skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development, and strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its members in attaining its objectives. We also welcome the debate on the Director-General's Report and the discussion therein on progress made in implementing the Decent Work Agenda, with special regard to respect for fundamental rights at work and in particular, the right to organize, freedom of association and collective bargaining. There is no more universal right than that of freedom of association, which guarantees the worker, without distinction of race, gender, culture, economic status or religion, the freedom to associate, to bargain collectively and to progress.

Nonetheless, we are seeing grave threats to the achievement of the fundamental rights of work and in particular to trade union freedoms because of the global slowdown and the recession. Stability and progress in rights at work are jeopardized by the international financial crisis which began in the

United States and may last for more than three years and set the scene for the destruction of decent work.

But this is not the only threat. The soaring prices of fuel and food have led to a swift deterioration in real wages, damaging highly dependent economies like our own; leading to increased social conflict and more labour disputes in countries like Peru. Indeed on the 9 July there is to be a national stoppage. Because of the increasing food prices, it may well be that workers and families cannot be assisted and that the situation gets worse, including in the formal parts of the economy. In Peru we can already see the effects, particularly in the rural areas, national industry and smaller micro-businesses and its self-employed people because of the loss of competitiveness, the increase in imports and the unfavourable terms of trade and exchange parities. With no state assistance we are faced with unbridled capitalism. Huge firms are making record profits while many Peruvians work long hours for low pay, enjoying few rights, especially in agri-business, textiles and mining. No concerted effort is made within the Peruvian State to face these economic and social imbalances.

The only action undertaken by the Ministry for Economic and Financial Affairs is to rely on market forces to achieve sustained growth. They think that macroeconomics will solve the serious problems that are emerging in various sectors, and they only consider the possibility of tax measures which will enable more flexibility in foreign and multinational investment.

Support for liberalization of the market and privatization of infrastructure and public services is still very much in vogue in our country and that at a time when developing countries have realized that these principles have failed.

The agreements reached at the Heads of State meeting of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, enshrined in the Lima Declaration, have again placed on the agenda the urgent need for our countries to find the right way to tackling the inequalities in income and eradicate poverty in line with the Millennium Development Goals which our neo-liberal economies are not structurally capable of realizing.

Despite the macroeconomic bonanza that is taking place in some countries, the development of mechanisms for social dialogue to reach consensus on policies that can tackle these economic and social imbalances, made worse by the economic slowdown and rising food prices must constitute a new strategy for tackling the emergency and strengthening the development of agreements for growth and decent employment.

It is only concerted action for stepping up the re-distribution policy that will give us sustainable and viable policies for fighting inequality and exclusion. Our commitment to social dialogue is robust and permanent because it will allow us to promote public policies to benefit the more vulnerable sectors and, thanks to this debate, it will be further strengthened in turn by the promotion of decent work worldwide. Through our combined efforts, we can meet the goals we have set for our countries.

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*Original French: Mr SALIM (Worker, Comoros)*

It is perhaps too early to give a full review of the situation of workers in the Comoros after Comoros's return to the International Labour Conference some 12 months ago. However, the International

Labour Organization, during that short period, sent more than ten ILO missions to the Comoros in order to support the ILO constituents through training and technical assistance in order to formulate policies in the areas of employment and social protection and the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). We are sure that the Comoros will be further supported, enabling the country to catch up after more than 14 years.

The Comoros have experienced the saddest period of their history caused by the separatism that arose after July 1997, and which affected the economy of the country and hampered the smooth running of the Republic and its workers, who paid the heavy price for the structural adjustment programmes designed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. As I speak before you, the workers of Comoros are suffering severe hardship due to the soaring cost of living, and the soaring cost of basic foodstuffs, which have plunged the workers into a situation even more precarious, than the one they faced before. There are arrears of payments to workers from 1995 to the end of 2001. In the private sector, the situation is different because most of the workers of the different sectors do not have proper employment contracts. There is as yet no minimum wage. Cronyism and nepotism are rampant in hiring, despite the Labour Code and the general status of civil servants.

Last year, our Secretary-General informed you of 408 dockworkers who had been dismissed at the Moroni Port and the dismissal of 300 teachers by the Government of the Island of Anjouan. Today I have the honour to announce that all the teachers are back in their posts and have been reinstated by the interim authorities following the establishment of the Constitution in Anjouan by the national army and that of the African Union. On 14 May 2008, the Appeals Court of Moroni handed down a judgement in favour of the 408 dockworkers who had been dismissed in Moroni Port. This is a victory indeed but we still have a long way to go because the CTC, the Confederation of Workers of Comoros, had won a number of cases that have not been applied for more than five years, so you understand what justice is like in my country in the field of labour codes.

Despite the vigilance of the judicial institutions, the employers continue to apply the law of the jungle by freely dismissing workers and flouting labour regulations, particularly in the field of redundancies. Participation of the CTC in drawing up national employment policies and those relating to social protection and the DWCP show the will of the Government to break with archaic practices which the Comoros have often experienced and we would encourage the Government to formalize the social dialogue by structuring it along the lines indicated in the text. We furthermore ask that the Comoros authorities ratify ILO Convention No. 97 in order to provide guarantees to the migrant workers of our country who leave the Comoros to work in other countries without any legal procedures whatsoever. It is because of this that young Comorian workers are experiencing ill-treatment at the hands Mauritian entrepreneurs with the complicity of a Comorian network. This phenomenon began in October 2007, and that is why we request the authorities of Comoros and Mauritius to shed light on this subject. Indeed, sources agree that, on the eve of the third millennium, there is slavery in the agricultural sec-

tors and in the building sector in Mauritius. The victims are first swindled of around €1,000 per person for the sake of a job in Mauritius. Once they arrive on the spot they are stripped of their passports and not allowed to communicate with the outside, and grouped in sheds which have no sanitary facilities, where they are forced to work for more than 17 hours a day for a pitiful salary of 120 euros per month. We promise you that we will give full collaboration on behalf of our organization to dismantle and punish the authors of this human trafficking. We ask for the ILO's help and that of the trade union community in order to help us put an end to it.

Since January 2008, the CTC has become a full member of the ITUC and we hope that our organization will receive help in order to enable it to catch up and defend tomorrow's workers, enabling them to face today's challenges.

The workers of the south-western islands of the Indian Ocean, with the support of the ILO, created a trade union structure which groups the trade union confederations of the countries in the area into a single trade union body for Indian Ocean workers the CSTOI. This was done during a trade union seminar for the subregion which took place in March 2008 in Moroni Comoros. This new body requires protection and support to enable it to act within the context of regional and subregional groupings and I would seize this opportunity to launch an urgent appeal to all participants by asking them to devote special attention to this new structure in the Indian Ocean by providing sport and advice.

In the face of the challenges of globalization, the consequence of which in developing countries are of great concern in terms of guaranteeing employment, social security and the cost of living, recommendations should be established enabling the UN structures to support the spread of decent work which is the only way to eradicate poverty and to enable civil peace to prevail in our various countries. These provisions would bring about an improvement in the living and working conditions for those who work in our different countries.

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Mr VERSTRAETEN (*representative, Social Alert*)

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I am speaking here today on behalf of two organizations: first of all Social Alert, the advocacy action of World Solidarity; and secondly, the International Young Christian Workers. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Director-General of the ILO for the very useful Report he has submitted to this session of the International Labour Conference, in particular, Report I(C) entitled *Decent Work: Some strategic challenges ahead*, which has captured our attention because we, as civil society actors, strongly believe in the ILO Decent Work Agenda. We strongly believe in the necessity of implementing this Agenda. Why? Because the Decent Work Agenda has an enormous potential, a potential that cannot only be reflected in numbers and statistics, i.e. by increasing the number of people escaping poverty and earning more than US\$1 or US\$2 a day, or by reducing the numbers of those working in the informal economy without legal or social protection. No, more positively and most significantly, the importance of the Decent Work Agenda lies in its potential to realize the development aspirations of all working men and women and we note with satisfaction that the Decent Work

Agenda has received a lot of support. It has been endorsed now at the global level by a number of United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2007 and has also been endorsed at the regional level, for example by the African Union Summit in Ouagadougou, in 2004, and the Council of the European Union adopted resolutions concerning decent work in 2006. However, endorsement is not enough.

Standing here in front of you today, we call for action. We call upon all ILO constituents to translate these endorsements into very concrete actions.

Now, this call to action is not just some virtual wording; it is actually a living document. It is a document that was adopted and issued by the international Decent Work Decent Life campaign, a campaign that is led by the International Trade Union Confederation, by our friends from Solidaridad, by the European Trade Union Confederation, by the Global Progressive Forum and, lastly, by Social Alert, to focus the action of world solidarity.

This living document was launched last year in Lisbon, at the occasion of the ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization. It comprises seven concrete demands to be made to the constituents of the ILO, most importantly, the governments.

I will run through them very quickly.

We call upon the constituents of this house to act, first of all, on decent work. Create stable and quality jobs for all, for women, for young workers, for migrant workers and for all those working in the informal economy, ensuring that all people have the right to work, to good working conditions and to a decent income to meet their basic needs. Moreover, for people to develop their full potential, it is crucial that governments ensure free and quality education for all people. Education, skills training and lifelong learning are key drivers of capability, of productivity and of human development.

Secondly, we ask you to act on rights, ratify and effectively implement the international labour standards and establish compliance mechanisms to realize decent work for all. All international organizations, governments and businesses must live up to their responsibility to respect fundamental workers' rights.

Thirdly, act on social protection, extend, strengthen and broaden social protection coverage by ensuring access to quality health care, to pensions, to unemployment benefits and maternity protection for all. Social protection is affordable even in poor countries, as evidence from the ILO suggests. Therefore, governments have to spend a significant percentage of their gross domestic product (GDP) on extending social protection. In the

process of extending social protection, authorities should build on the initiatives that are taken right now by actors of the social economy and try to institutionalize these initiatives.

The fourth and the fifth policy areas in which we would like you to act are trade and debt. Economic policies, trade policies, trade agreements, debt policies must be reviewed and adapted to ensure coherence with the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO. There is no point endorsing the Decent Work Agenda when trade agreements and debt policies do not reflect the views of workers' organizations and other civil society actors, when they do not adequately integrate respect for the core labour standards and when they simply fail to address their impact on the most vulnerable in society.

The sixth policy area is aid. Policy coherence in aid is just as important as it is for trade and debt. In fact, the positive impact of official development aid could be greatly enhanced if there were more coherence between these different policy areas. Governments have to honour their commitment to increase the level of official development assistance to at least 0.7 per cent of GDP.

Lastly, migration is the seventh policy area. It must be ensured that migrant workers are not exploited and enjoy the same rights as other workers by ratifying and implementing the relevant ILO Conventions and the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Equally, governments must continue to combat human trafficking, in accordance with the relevant UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

As I said, we launched this living document in October 2007 in Lisbon, at the ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization in the presence of the ILO Director-General. He stated then that a global decent work movement was in the making. Today, we count on you to join this movement, to join us, and to give it substance to make decent work for a decent life a reality for all by addressing the areas we just presented.

This call to action is your entrance ticket to the world cup for decent work. Take a copy home, sign the call to action on the decent work web site and be part of our intense but most rewarding game.

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The PRESIDENT

We have come to end of the list of speakers. I declare the seventh sitting closed.

*(The Conference adjourned at 8.55 p.m.)*

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