



First sitting

Wednesday, 3 June 2009, 10.20 a.m.

Presidents: Mr Rapacki, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and Mr Hossain

OPENING OF THE SESSION

Mr RAPACKI (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

It is my privilege as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to declare open the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference. I should also like to take the opportunity to wish you all a warm welcome to Geneva.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

Mr RAPACKI (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

Our first task is the election of the President of the Conference. May I now call for nominations for this post? I give the floor to the Chairperson of the Government group, Mr Arias Palacio.

Original Spanish: Mr ARIAS PALACIO (Government, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the Government group)

On behalf of the Government group, it is a pleasure for me to present the candidacy of His Excellency, Mr Khandker Hossain, Minister of Labour and Employment and Expatriates, Welfare and Overseas Employment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, as President of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Original Spanish: Mr FUNES DE RIOJA (Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office)

On behalf of the Employers' group, it is my pleasure to support the candidacy of the Minister from Bangladesh as President of the Conference. It would be an honour for us if he were to preside over the Conference at this crucial time in terms of both the content of our discussions and future planning. The Employers' group thus seconds the Government nomination.

Mr TROTMAN (*Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

On behalf of the Workers' group, I wish to indicate that the Workers are very happy to support the candidacy of the Minister from Bangladesh. We look forward to fruitful collaboration and to a very positive outcome of the Conference under his presidency.

Mr RAPACKI (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

The proposal made by Ambassador Arias Palacio on behalf of the Government group has been duly seconded. In the absence of other proposals, I have great pleasure in declaring His Excellency Mr Khandker Hossain, Minister of Labour and Employment and Expatriates, Welfare and Overseas Employment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, President of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference. I offer him my warmest congratulations, and invite him to come up to the podium to take the chair.

(Mr Khandker Hossain, Minister of Labour and Employment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, is elected President of the Conference and takes the President's chair.)

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The PRESIDENT

It is indeed a privilege for me, and my country, Bangladesh, to have received your support to be elected President for this year's session of the Conference.

I wish to express my deepest thanks to the Asia-Pacific group and to the intergovernmental group of the Conference for nominating me to this position. My thanks go also to the Employers' and Workers' groups for supporting my candidature. I would like to thank you all for your trust and confidence in me and my country. This should encourage us to go further as we embark on creating a forward-looking and globally competent Bangladesh.

Our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, has extended her full support and warmest wishes for a successful Conference, and has asked me to convey her regrets for not being able to join you.

Distinguished delegates, my association with the ILO goes back a long way. During my professional career, I have had the opportunity of serving this Organization in different locations. I would therefore like to assure you that I am fully aware of the critical values and objectives for which the ILO stands, and that all of us here share in the ILO's 90th year of tireless campaigning for social justice through its unique tripartite deliberations and consensus which have been a source of hope for many around the globe, especially the poor. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which was adopted by the Conference last year, is a

testament to the common goals and objectives that bind us together.

We are at present in the midst of a grave financial and economic crisis. In nearly all our countries, the real economy has been hit hard, jobs and income losses are mounting by the day. Poverty and vulnerability is increasing everywhere, threatening social and political security. This situation needs a truly collective result and a collective plan of action. At the heart of this must lie a concerted design to promote jobs and decent work, as otherwise a global social recession will be difficult to avoid.

I am confident that, through tripartite dialogue and cooperation in true ILO style and tradition, we can contribute to setting a global agenda towards a jobs-based recovery of the global economy.

In three weeks from now, we are expected to produce some documents that should chart the way forward to such a recovery. Let us join forces to achieve this mandate for our shared benefit. I thank you all once again for entrusting me with the honour of guiding this process to its successful conclusion.

COMPOSITION OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The PRESIDENT

We shall now proceed directly with the various administrative tasks before us during this first sitting this morning. The Conference is called upon, under article 5 of the Standing Orders, to establish a Credential Committee. I turn to the Clerk of the Conference to announce the candidatures for this Committee.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

The nominations for the Credentials Committee are as follows: Government group, Mr Smythe (*Australia*); Employers' group, Ms Horvatić (*Croatia*); and Workers' group, Mr Edström (*Sweden*).

The PRESIDENT

May I take it that these candidatures are adopted?

(The proposals are adopted.)

ELECTION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT

In accordance with article 25, paragraph 2, of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference, we must now elect the Vice-Presidents of the Conference. In this connection, I wish to inform you that the Government group is continuing consultations regarding the nomination of the Government Vice-President of the Conference and will submit a nomination for this post at a later stage.

The Clerk of the Conference will now read out the nominations made by the other groups.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

The nominations to posts of Employer and Worker Vice-Presidents of the Conference are as follows: Employers' group, Mr Allam (*Egypt*); Workers' group, Mr Zellhoefer (*United States*).

The PRESIDENT

May I take it that these proposals are adopted?

(The proposals are adopted.)

It is my pleasure to invite my fellow Officers to come up and join me on the podium.

NOMINATION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE GROUPS

The PRESIDENT

The Clerk of the Conference will now inform the Conference of the groups' nominations of their Officers.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

The groups have chosen their Officers as follows:

Government group:

Chairperson:

Mr Palacios Arias (*Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*)

Employers' group:

Chairperson:

Mr Funes de Rioja (*Argentina*)

Vice-Chairpersons:

Mr Dahlan (*Saudi Arabia*)

Mr Makeka (*Lesotho*)

Mr Lima Godoy (*Brazil*)

Ms Goldberg (*United States*)

Mr Moore (*United Kingdom*)

Secretary:

Mr Peñalosa (*International Organisation of Employers*)

Workers' group:

Chairperson:

Mr Trotman (*Barbados*)

Vice-Chairpersons:

Mr Ahmed (*Pakistan*)

Ms Francisco (*Angola*)

Mr Gómez (*Colombia*)

Ms Sundnes (*Norway*)

Secretary:

Ms Gonzalez (*International Trade Union Confederation*)

Other Officers of the Workers' group, apart from the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, are: Mr Ghandour (*Sudan*), Mr Omar (*Nigeria*), Ms Burrow (*Australia*), Mr Nakajima (*Japan*), Ms Brighi (*Italy*), Mr Sidorov (*Russian Federation*), Mr Sidi Said (*Algeria*), Ms Goulart (*Brazil*).

CONSTITUTION AND COMPOSITION OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

The PRESIDENT

The next agenda item concerns the constitution of standing committees and committees to consider items on the agenda of the Conference. The Conference may wish to establish the following committees: the Selection Committee; the Finance Committee; the Committee on the Application of Standards; the Committee on HIV/AIDS; and the Committee on Gender Equality.

The composition of the Committees, as proposed by the groups, is available in the room.

If there are no objections, may I take it that these proposals are adopted?

(The proposals are adopted.)

The Conference may also wish to take as a basis for discussion on HIV/AIDS in the world of work the text prepared by the Office and to refer it to the appropriate Committee, as provided in article 40, paragraph 1, of the Standing Orders.

If there are no objections, may I take it that this proposal is adopted?

(The proposal is adopted.)

COMPOSITION OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

The PRESIDENT

I shall now ask the Clerk of the Conference to read out the nominations made by the groups for the composition of the Selection Committee.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

The composition of the Selection Committee, in accordance with article 4 of the Standing Orders and the nominations by the respective groups, is as follows.

The 28 regular Government members are the regular members of the Governing Body of the following countries: Argentina; Australia; Austria; Bangladesh; Barbados; Brazil; Burundi; China; Czech Republic; France; Germany; India; Italy; Japan; Jordan; Mexico; Mozambique; Nigeria; Panama; Poland; Russian Federation; Singapore; South Africa; United Republic of Tanzania; Tunisia; United Kingdom; United States; and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The deputy Government members are: Belgium; Benin; Bulgaria; Cambodia; Canada; Congo; Cuba; Egypt; El Salvador; Ghana; Guinea; Hungary; Islamic Republic of Iran; Kenya; Republic of Korea; Lebanon; Lithuania; Pakistan; Peru; Portugal; Qatar; Spain; Sudan; Sweden; Thailand; Uruguay; Viet Nam; and Zambia.

The 14 regular Employer members are: Mr Allam (*Egypt*), Mr Barde (*Switzerland*), Mr Dahlan (*Saudi Arabia*), Mr Ferrer Dufol (*Spain*), Mr Funes de Rioja (*Argentina*), Ms Gerstein (*Germany*), Mr Julien (*France*), Mr Lima Godoy (*Brazil*), Mr Moore (*United Kingdom*), Mr Nacoulma (*Burkina Faso*), Mr Oshinowo (*Nigeria*), Mr Potter (*United States*), Mr Suzuki (*Japan*), Mr Tabani (*Pakistan*).

The deputy Employer members are: Ms Awassi Atsimadja (*Gabon*), Mr Côté (*Canada*), Ms Horvatic (*Croatia*), Mr Jeetun (*Mauritius*), Mr Mdwaba (*South Africa*), Mr Modi (*India*), Ms Muñoz (*Venezuela*), Mr O'Reilly (*New Zealand*), Mr Rahman (*Bangladesh*), Mr de Regil (*Mexico*), Mr Rønneft (*Denmark*), Mr Tan (*Philippines*), Mr Tomek (*Austria*), Mr Trogen (*Sweden*).

The 14 regular Worker members are the names I read out earlier as officers of the Workers' group. I shall therefore not repeat them.

The deputy Worker members are: Ms Byers (*Canada*), Mr Cortebeeck (*Belgium*), Mr Sithole (*Swaziland*).

The PRESIDENT

If there are no objections, may I take it that this proposal is adopted?

(The proposal is adopted.)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON CRISIS RESPONSES

The PRESIDENT

The next item requiring a decision by the Conference is the proposed establishment of a Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses.

The Governing Body of the International Labour Office, at its 304th Session in March this year, acknowledging the magnitude of the global financial and economic crisis, and the devastating effects that it is having on the world of work, wished to allow the possibility of holding a substantive discussion on the employment and social policy consequences

of the crisis, with a view to determining the ILO's role and response in seeking to resolve its effects.

The Governing Body therefore made a series of proposals to the Conference regarding its programme of work, which included establishing a Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses, and a Global Summit within the plenary of the Conference to discuss the global jobs crisis.

Under article 8 of the Standing Orders of the Conference, the Conference may appoint a committee to consider and report on any matter.

May I therefore take it that the Conference notes the recommendations of the March 2009 session of the Governing Body and decides to arrange its programme of work accordingly, including the establishment, under article 8 of the Conference Standing Orders, of a Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses to discuss the matter of the ILO's response to the employment and social policy consequences of the economic and financial crisis?

(The proposals are adopted.)

As its name indicates, the Committee of the Whole is open to all delegates and advisers at the Conference, but they are invited to register in accordance with the standard procedure. The composition of the Committee is therefore determined at that stage, but will be published later.

SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT

The next agenda item concerns the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference.

The purpose of these suspensions – which are recommended by me and by my fellow Officers – is to accommodate various changes that are proposed to the format of the Conference.

If you will bear with me, I shall enumerate the provisions presented for suspension by the Conference, as follows:

- for the consideration of the Programme and Budget for 2010–11, article 11bis, in order to allow the Finance Committee of Government Representatives to consider and approve the programme and budget without a preliminary debate in the plenary;
- for the discussion of the Global Report on the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, and for the ILO Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis which, as you are aware, is to be a feature of this Conference, to the extent necessary to enable interventions of Heads of State, Prime Ministers and Vice-Presidents, and panel presentations, it is proposed to suspend:
 - the limitation concerning the number of statements by each member State in plenary, and to that extent, article 12, paragraph 3;
 - the provisions regarding time limits of speeches and to that extent, article 14, paragraph 6;
 - the sequence in which speakers are given the floor, in order to facilitate an exchange of views and to that extent the provisions of article 14, paragraph 2;
- for the ILO Summit, solely to the extent necessary to enable interventions of Heads of State, Prime Ministers and Vice-Presidents, and panel presentations, it is proposed also to suspend:

- the rules on moving the closure of the discussion provided in article 16.
- for the work of the Committee on Gender Equality and the Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses, it is proposed to suspend:
 - the provisions on the order in which speakers are given the floor, namely, to that extent, article 62, paragraph 1, second part of the sentence (after the word “the Chairman”);
 - the provisions regarding time limits of speeches and, to that extent, article 62, paragraph 3.

For the Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses, it is proposed to also suspend, in the event of the Committee itself so deciding, the presentation of a report to the Committee for approval referred to in article 57, paragraph 3, last part of the last sentence to permit presentation of the report of the Committee’s work directly to the Conference after submitting it to the Officers, but without submitting it to the Committee for its approval.

The deadline established by article 63, paragraph 4, to allow for more flexibility in the Committee’s work. For the reply of the Director-General, it is proposed to suspend the second sentence of article 23, paragraph 2, solely for the purpose of permitting

the Director-General to respond in writing to points raised in the plenary discussion of the Report of the Director-General. A decision on this proposal will be taken at the next sitting of the Conference.

The proceedings in plenary will be recorded in the *Provisional Record* of the Conference published in English, French and Spanish. In addition to the written records, the plenary proceedings will also be webcast in video format and delegates’ interventions will be web-recorded? in the original languages. They will therefore be immediately available for reading. The *Daily Bulletin* will give the information on access to this system.

We have now concluded the bulk of the administrative tasks necessary for the functioning of the 98th Session. To finalize this work, as I explained earlier, I shall now close the first sitting and open the second sitting immediately afterwards. May I kindly request you to remain in your seats, the pause in your business will be no longer than three minutes. The first sitting of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference is closed.

(The Conference adjourned at 10.55 a.m.)

Second sitting

Wednesday, 3 June 2009, 11 a.m.

President: Mr Hossain

SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE CONFERENCE (*CONT.*)

The PRESIDENT

The second sitting of this session of the Conference is called to order.

As I informed you earlier, our first task is to adopt the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders, as proposed in our first sitting. If there are no objections, may I consider that this proposal is adopted?

(The proposal is adopted.)

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO THE OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT

Given that the next plenary sitting for official business under the agenda of this session of the Conference will not be held until Tuesday, 9 June, the routine tasks related to the organization of the Conference will be carried out by the Officers of the Conference, if the Conference wishes to confer on them the necessary powers. I shall now ask the Clerk of the Conference to read out, for your approval, the delegation of authority.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization hereby delegates to its President, and three Vice-Presidents authority to take any decisions or perform any functions within the competence of the Conference, with respect to any matter that needs to be dealt with before the Conference resumes its plenary sittings, unless the Officers consider that the Conference should hold a sitting to discuss such matters.

Decisions taken under this delegation of authority will be set out in the *Provisional Records* of the work of the Conference. This delegation shall take effect at the end of this sitting and shall terminate when the Conference resumes its plenary sittings.

The PRESIDENT

If there are no objections, may I take it that the delegation of authority is accepted?

(The delegation of authority is accepted.)

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The PRESIDENT

It is my honour to invite the Chairperson of the Governing Body, Mr Rapacki of Poland, to introduce his report to the Conference.

Mr RAPACKI (*Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*)

It is my great honour and privilege as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the ILO to present my report on the Governing Body's work for 2008–09 to the Conference. This report is published in *Provisional Record* No. 1. As it speaks for itself, I shall not detain the Conference with repetition of the information given in the report, but shall simply touch

on several points that I consider important. The Governing Body has had a very active year and has undertaken a great deal of work. Quite aside from the business – very important business – of overseeing the work of the Office through its various committees, the Governing Body, through its Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee considered the Programme and Budget proposals for 2010–11 for the Organization. These proposals, as you know, come before the Finance Committee of Government members at the present session of the Conference. The key word regarding the proposal is “balance”. The global financial and economic crisis is placing serious constraints on the public resources of member States. A zero real-growth budget was thus endorsed for submission to the Conference. However, it is unquestionable that in times of crisis, that the world truly has need of a strong International Labour Organization. As you are certainly aware, at its November session, the Governing Body re-elected Mr Juan Somavia as Director-General of the International Labour Office for a further term of five years.

The Governing Body has followed up on the work of the 97th Session of the Conference notably by establishing a temporary steering group to ensure that all elements of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the resolution on strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization were dealt with adequately and appropriately. The steering group set out an implementation plan in the form of a road map, which was adopted by the Governing Body in March and which will affect the shape of our annual conferences for years to come. The implementation plan includes a scheme of recurrent discussions to be held by the Conference on each of the strategic priorities in turn. The first of these will be held at the 99th Session of the Conference next year and is on the strategic priority of employment. The Governing Body further decided that the strategic priority of social protection would be taken up by the 100th Session of the Conference in 2011. These are new departures for the ILO and the aim is to bring the Organization closer to the needs of its constituents and to make it more responsive to your requirements. The steering group also considered the follow-up to the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and decided to place a formal review of the question as an item on the agenda of the 99th Session of the Conference, with a view to ensuring the coherence of this powerful tool in light of the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

However, the decisions taken by the Governing Body in relation to this session of the Conference will have the most immediate effect on participants here today. At its March session, the Governing Body adopted a series of decisions to alter the shape of the 98th Session of the Conference to allow it to address the global economic and financial crisis. This alternation in our agenda undertaken to allow the Conference to address the global financial and economic crisis is certainly a sign that our Organization in its 90th year remains fully responsive to

the social and employment problems besetting the world which are at the core of its mandate. It is a sign of great vitality and proves that the ILO, through its unique contact with the real economy, is in touch with its constituents and is able to find rapid solutions to the problems that fall within its mandate. I have no doubt that the steps taken so far to enhance this action will prove fruitful and that under Mr Somavia's guidance the Organization will continue its work of promoting social justice in the twenty-first century. With these words, I commend my report to you – which contains fuller details of the Governing Body's action over the past twelve months, and I wish you a most successful Conference.

**STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE
EMPLOYERS' AND WORKERS' GROUPS OF THE
CONFERENCE**

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

Mr Secretary-General, on behalf of the Employers' group, it is my pleasure to take the floor at this opening session of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference. A Conference that is now firmly focused on developing strategies to bring an end to the crisis in labour markets. The initiative to refocus the Conference to deal with the global job crisis in a more comprehensive manner and to formulate exit strategies is an extremely important one. We as Employers advocated this change for the following reasons. First, because of the unprecedented severity of the crisis. Enterprises are struggling to remain competitive and are now overwhelmed by the impact on production and job losses across all sectors and in all regions. Second, for reasons of relevance and credibility, since this crisis is the biggest issue we have faced since the 1930s. The ILO had a duty to demonstrate that it has adopted an emergency mode in response to an emergency situation. Third, because we felt that the 2008 Declaration had made the ILO more demand-driven and would enable it to become more responsive to issues. Fourth, because it presented an opportunity for the ILO as the internationally-recognized agency mandated to deal with labour markets to demonstrate its ability to tackle the crisis and assist labour market actors in their endeavours to exit their crisis in the middle of this really big storm. I think that we are also here because collectively we, as Employers, Workers and Governments, recognize these things and agree that the Conference needs to come up with some of the answers to address what is perhaps the most serious issue to have affected labour markets in living memory. The challenge is both complex and daunting. The expectations from our respective constituents are high but I am glad to say that we are at least at the first stage. However, we are aware of course that the capacity to build consensus is a real challenge for tripartism. Let me mention that, as and we have said many times, we need an ILO that has new answers to new issues. We cannot merely repeat the past as an offering for the future.

The world has changed and the crisis has led to changes that are more pronounced than anyone could have predicted when the Declaration was adopted. The Conference is the time to find the solution. Let me now continue in Spanish.

(The speaker continues in Spanish.)

As employers we defend and will defend free initiatives and the right of ownership in all circumstances. It is clear that there can be no sustainable private enterprise without a state which is effective and which guarantees legal security. And being effective does not mean merely carrying out essential functions. It means regulating the market in an intelligent manner. Not suffocating the markets, but making sure that they can carry out their mission. It is not a question of appropriating enterprise or private wealth. At the end of the day, it is a question of reconciling the common interest with values and principles which inspire modern society with the legitimate interest in promoting sustainable development and fair and decent work on the basis of work which is freely chosen, and creating a conducive environment for enterprise creation and technological innovation. This is our vision and commitment.

This is a unique opportunity to respond to the crisis on the basis of a tripartite consensus and in real time, by sending out a message to the international community, from the point of view of governments, employers and workers, in other words from the real economy. But we also want to produce a remit for the Office, so that it can help countries to exit the crisis in terms of employment and so that it can help respond to questions such as how to make that assistance more efficient and targeted so that the effects of the crisis will be minimal. This is the challenge. Let's go for it. Thank you very much.

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

On behalf of the Workers' group, I should like to congratulate the President and his nation, Bangladesh, on his election to reside over this Conference. As we said before, we look forward to his guidance in ensuring that this session of the Conference becomes an historic occasion, one that our children and their children might look back to and compliment us for what we may achieve. Conversely, I hope that we will not have occasion, when we become old, to have those same children express the view that they wasted their lives and their opportunities. And so, much depends on us on this particular occasion. I think we are all very honoured to be part of this Conference, and we hope that we will achieve our objectives.

The 90th anniversary of the ILO is being celebrated during this year, and it is an appropriate time for us to remember that 90 years should represent an occasion for us – it certainly does for us in the Workers' group – to commit ourselves, even more than we did years ago, to those objectives which guide us, and which underline and cement the objectives of this Organization when it was formed some 90 years ago. And we would wish, in the Workers' group, to re-emphasize that, as far as we are concerned, the ILO remains the soul of human interaction in the world of work. And, as the soul, it must guide the intellect, it must guide the hands, it must guide whatever else we shall do. The 90th anniversary is particularly vital because of the world threat, which is even now more staggering than the one in the earlier part of the 20th Century, which brought out the best in the leaders of the world as it stood then. And where we have threats of this sort, we believe the challenge is even greater for those who will lead, to strive as they have never striven before, to bring out initiatives similar to those initia-

tives which were exercised at the end of the Second World War, and indeed at other times of crisis.

One thing that stands out for us in the Workers' group is that the ILO mantra is as relevant and as potent today as it was 90 years ago, when it said that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. We are all in this crisis. I will not say we are all in the crisis together, because when crises or dangers face us, it is true in our parlance in my country, that "every man breaks for himself." Put in proper English, that means that every person endeavours to look for his own salvation, his or her own little nook in which to hide himself or herself, and forgets the other person. But the truth is that none of us can escape. We are all in it together. Mind you, some countries are doing better than others. And that is fine, we have no problem with that as a Workers' group, except that we wish to say that that situation may not remain the same, because where those who are not doing so well are neglected by those who may be doing much better – or who, in fact, may be doing quite well – their failure to do well will bring us all into a position where those who are better off will fall into the same category as countries where collapse will take place. And where social collapse takes place, it will not take place for one group and not for another. It will not take place for the rich and not for the poor, or for the rich countries and not for the poor countries.

The G20 countries have recognized the important role which the ILO, and especially this Conference, has to play in trying to avoid the destruction of our present social order. In short, the G20 countries recognize the point that I am making here. They recognize that if the social order is not going to be destroyed, then our role has to be a vital one which is given full support. Now, naturally, I do not expect employers or governments to believe that the Workers' group accepts this current social order as it now exists. And it would be unwise for you to conclude from anything we say that we think that the previous social order was a satisfactory one. The contrary is true: we believe that it is that social order that has led to the problems that we now have. There must, therefore, be change. And we demand change in the social order, and in the financial and economic status which drives the current status quo. But our communities as well must strive to ensure that community collapse does not follow the financial and economic collapse which we are currently experiencing. Our work in this Conference is to assist in finding solutions and in submitting any recommendations that may deliver bread, equality, democracy and peace. The Workers' group, is ready to play its part.

PRESENTATION CONCERNING THE ILO'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The PRESIDENT

The next item on our agenda this morning concerns the 90th anniversary of our Organization, which as you know is being celebrated this year. It is my pleasure to invite you to review a brief 90th anniversary video.

The video was shown, and can be seen at the following Internet site:

www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Broadcast_materials/b-rolls/lang-en/docName--WCMS_104961/index.htm.

I now invite the Secretary-General of the Conference to take the floor.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

Dear friends, I will make some references to the political implications of the 90th anniversary in my inaugural speech in a while from now but I thought that I would share with you what has happened in your regions.

This video that you have seen was seen all over the world and we have recorded the struggles of these 90 years of the ILO in your regions and I want to thank you for what you have all done. A total of 120 countries and 200 events taking place in the same week, 21 to 28 April, and it is still going on. It is a fantastic reaction and this is the reason why we decided to dedicate these few moments to the regions.

Thousands of participants have been involved, ranging from Heads of State and Government down to the grassroots. Events in capitals, in stadiums, in schools, at fairs and in the streets. Events held in the workplace from parliaments to ports, from oil refineries to mines. Decent Work Country Programmes have been launched, Conventions signed, Tripartite Agreements brokered, subregional tripartite bodies created to monitor them. Events launching new tools from social security schemes to labour market surveys, national conferences, workshops, panel discussions, training sessions. Events brimming with creativity, children's competitiveness, sports, photo exhibits, dances and songs. The song you heard between one sitting and the next is a mixture of songs put together for this special occasion in different countries. Occasions where books have been launched, prizes awarded, sculptures unveiled, coins minted, even stamps issued for the ILO. The list goes on and on.

Even though numbers are not the whole story, they *do tell* a story. They tell the people's story in these times of crisis. The heart of this anniversary is the energy, commitment and creativity which *you* have brought to these initiatives. I am humbled by the immense convening power which you have harnessed in your countries. In one week, you in fact alone produced a global summit at the local level, because it happened at the same time all over the world.

So, to get a feel of what went on and to honour our work in the regions, I have asked our regional directors, under the authority of the President, to make a very short presentation to give us a flavour of the richness of the activities undertaken. But this is to honour you and to honour the work that we do in the regions.

Thank you so much for everything that you have done. Some 200 events, 120 countries, 21–28 April. It is unique in our history and it is a fantastic demonstration of the commitment to the cause.

Thank you so much.

The PRESIDENT

I now invite the Conference to take a trip around the world in relation to the ILO's 90th anniversary, with each of the Organization's regional directors.

I call on Mr Charles Dan, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Africa, to take the floor first.

Mr DAN (*Director, ILO Regional Office for Africa*)

The 90th anniversary was celebrated in 49 out of 53 member States in Africa. Specific topics were selected in most countries, including social dia-

logue, youth employment and occupational safety and health.

The diverse activities included a photography exhibition in Ethiopia, the dissemination of memorial coins and stamps in Egypt, popular processions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana, decent work songs in Madagascar and the Seychelles, and talks and marches with children in Morocco and Niger. There were also poetry and essay competitions in Cameroon, Namibia and Swaziland, as well as tripartite basketball matches in Kenya and tripartite football matches in Sudan. In Nigeria, the inauguration of the new ILO Office was a very moving moment.

But allow me here today to highlight three major features. First, the 90th anniversary provided an opportunity to focus on today's urgent priorities. From a televised round table in Togo, to street interviews in Senegal, from high-level conferences and panel discussions in Angola, Benin, Botswana, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Mali, Mauritius, Tunisia and Zambia, to the first ever held national employment summit in Nigeria. The celebrations almost everywhere addressed the implications of the crisis on Africa's peoples and a strong message was given of the importance of a concerted reply focussed on local development and a vibrant social economy.

A second feature is the urgency to implement decent work programmes in countries emerging from crisis. In Zimbabwe, the Prime Minister, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai, joined tripartite constituents at the signing of the Decent Work Country Programme. In Côte d'Ivoire, a tripartite event was held on promoting decent work for post-crisis reconstruction in the presence of the Prime Minister, Mr Guillaume Soro, and the same trend was observed in Burundi, Comoros, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Third, tripartism has been widely promoted as a powerful development tool. Indeed, the ILO tripartite constituents were involved in the events and activities propelled by this tripartite driving force; thousands of people joined the celebrations. From government officials to members of parliament in Uganda, from social partners to grass-roots organizations in the United Republic of Tanzania, from women's associations to youth movements in Mauritania and Mozambique, every spectrum of the population joins the celebrations.

The anniversary has greatly served to promote the ILO's core Conventions, the Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, the Decent Work Agenda in Africa, the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, including its translation into international languages.

Yes, indeed, in Africa we enjoy celebrations. We respect age. We respect experience. For all these reasons, the 90th anniversary has indeed been a wonderful success in Africa.

The PRESIDENT

I now call on Ms Sachiko Yamamoto, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, to take the floor.

Ms YAMAMOTO (*Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*)

Twenty-two countries in Asia and the Pacific marked the ILO 90th anniversary events and did so in a number of ways. Governments and organizations of workers and employers were active in organizing events in all these countries, with themes ranging from improved occupational safety and health, strengthening industrial relations, to striking a better balance between career and family.

All the events celebrated the achievements of the ILO's 90 years of working towards social justice. But our constituents also used the occasion to hold dialogue about the economic and job crisis facing the people of their countries and to discuss responses. That happened in China, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, but, of course, the crisis was the underlying theme in all the countries.

So it was an auspicious yet very timely occasion, reaffirming the relevance of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda at a time of the crisis.

The event attracted high-level participation across Asia and the Pacific. Heads of State and government leaders took part in countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Thailand, as did ministers of labour.

Her Excellency Gloria Arroyo, President of the Philippines, said her country wished to enhance its commitment to pursue the ideals and principles of the ILO. She made the statement as part of a Presidential Proclamation declaring 21 April to 1 May "ILO Week".

In Thailand, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva stated that the present crisis, especially in Asia, with its labour-intensive economies, would mean that the ILO has a very important role to play as we move forward to meet the challenge.

In the Lebanese Parliament, a high-level tripartite meeting was held in honour of the 90th anniversary, with a special focus on the ILO's Declarations. Meanwhile, in Jordan, the anniversary was marked with an emphasis on the Better Work campaign, jointly sponsored by the ILO and the International Finance Corporation.

But the ILO 90th anniversary event organizers also reached out to other partners, for example, the ministries of commerce, industry and women's affairs in Cambodia and ASEAN. The ILO 90th events in Asia and the Pacific also reached out to the public at large. The media played a large part. In Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, radio and television programmes featured the 90th anniversary with compelling features and talk shows on issues that concern the public and their world of work. In China, Sri Lanka and elsewhere, newspaper reports and editorials used the ILO 90th as a peg to deal with the serious issues facing the world of work.

Reaching out to all is important. The smiling faces of children seen at many of the ILO 90th events in Asia and the Pacific was a reminder to us all of why we work for a better world. We made the point in Asia and the Pacific that our aim is to make the world of work better for the world.

The PRESIDENT

It is now my honour to give the floor to Mr Jean Maninat, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The 90th anniversary of the ILO in the Americas and the Caribbean was a very good opportunity to consider the role of the ILO in this region and to see what contribution it makes in the development of our societies, and to examine the near future in the context of the crisis which is impacting seriously on employment.

In the Americas and the Caribbean there has been a whole array of activities, including meetings attended by Heads of State, tripartite forums attended by employers' and workers' representatives and members of the Governing Body, the distribution of publications, activities involving governments and local actors and meetings in parliament, and with youth organizations.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, five Heads of State reiterated their commitment to the ILO and to decent work at tripartite events.

The President of Argentina, Ms Kirchner, emphasized the need to integrate the ILO into the G20 debates to weather the crisis. This was underpinned one day later by the Brazilian President, Mr Lula da Silva. Both these high-level politicians supported the idea of the ILO being involved in the G20. Oscar Arias, the President of Costa Rica, spoke of the need for social dialogue within the crisis and underlined the role of the ILO.

Mr Zelaya, the President of Honduras, inaugurated a concrete mechanism to afford social protection to self-employed and independent workers following a tripartite agreement.

The Jamaican Prime Minister, Mr Golding, inaugurated a forum of governments, employers and workers of the Caribbean designed to launch a plan aimed at combating the crisis.

The Paraguayan President, Mr Lugo, addressed young people at a youth employment fair and urged them to rediscover the fundamental value of labour.

Twenty-two countries attended various tripartite events within the very heart of the Decent Work Agenda.

In Santiago de Chile an international seminar was held and I would like to emphasize that it was truly international. It concerned labour inspection measures and a whole string of guidelines were adopted there with respect to the crisis.

In Central America and the Dominican Republic we had a seminar to present a study on freedom of association and collective bargaining in the sub-region. Moreover, at the Multi Forum Conosur we examined the issue of the social responsibility of enterprises within the framework of the Declaration on Multinational Enterprises (the MNE Declaration) and there was considerable participation from several members of our Governing Body there as well.

In Brazil, we held a conference on decent work in Mato Grosso which brought together representatives from various states and municipalities united by decent work.

In Bolivia we concluded an agreement on the setting up of a tripartite national system for the certification of labour skills.

In Panama, a new instrument has been created, called the QUIPUSTAT, to promote our work to follow up labour statistics in the region.

In Colombia there was a national congress on labour rights and social security.

In Central America, we had a tripartite forum with a study on the impact of the crisis on employment and what measures could be taken to weather the crisis. The region's training institutions issued a declaration recognizing the ILO in the context of the CINTERFOR network and activities touched upon the world of art and popular gatherings.

In Brazil, we had a new sculpture inaugurated which commemorates the 90th anniversary and represents tripartism.

In Costa Rica, a plaque was inaugurated which commemorates social achievement. All these activities and others were carried out and recorded day by day on the Internet.

I would also like to emphasize, in particular, the support of our constituents in the region and the members of the Governing Body. I would also like to highlight their commitment to make this 90th anniversary celebration a celebration of participation and common action against the crisis.

Never before have we felt so proud to be international public servants working for this august Organization and promoting the values it represents.

The PRESIDENT

We shall conclude our trip round the world by returning to Europe. I will ask Ms Petra Ulshoefer, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, to take the floor.

Ms ULSHOEFER (Director, ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia)

First of all, I would like to highlight the enthusiasm of the tripartite constituents to take the opportunity of the ILO's 90th anniversary to engage in a series of national commemorative activities. These were not only held in capital cities but also across different regions of some countries. So far, there have been around 40 events in 20 countries across Europe and Asia and at least two more are scheduled for the autumn of this year: in Hungary and Austria. They mobilized high-level attendance: presidents, in Albania for example; or prime ministers in Ireland; heads of the parliament or the senate in France; many ministers of labour; heads of the social partner organizations; parliamentarians; academia, the UN and other partner organizations.

The diversity of events and themes was remarkable and reflected national priorities. There were book launches on the history of the ILO in Ireland, ILO library inaugurations at state universities, national parliaments or social partners' education facilities in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, celebrations of national anniversaries of ILO membership, also in Ukraine, or of the institutionalization of national social dialogue in Poland, the launching of a national child labour monitoring unit in Tajikistan, thematic seminars on the application of ILO Conventions at the national level on occupational safety and health in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Serbia, on seafarers in Spain, or on decent work for domestic workers in Belgium.

In many of the western European countries, France, Germany, Italy and Portugal, conferences and round tables focused on the historical evolution of the ILO and its values over time, leading to the Decent Work Agenda. Much emphasis was given to media coverage and visibility of the ILO and its key messages in the press, radio and TV and also through posters across the public transport system in Belgrade and the metro in Moscow. The events

were often an opportunity to highlight and appreciate the country's achievements as a result of their cooperation with the ILO over the years and in the framework of the Decent Work Agenda, for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova.

Two common aspects came to the fore in all these activities. First, the universality of the ILO's values since its creation has been demonstrated in the three Declarations of 1944, 1998 and 2008, the international labour standards and the Decent Work Agenda. The Irish Prime Minister referred to the creation of the International Labour Code as an enormous contribution to the development of employment rights, social policy, and equal opportunities at the level of the European Union and across the globe. The second common aspect is the enduring relevance of these values for each national context and its tripartite constituency in developed and developing countries, as well as for those in transition.

We can truly say that the constituents, throughout all these commemorative activities, recognized the strength they had gained from the ILO's history to address the challenges of today and to shape a better future in line with the Director-General's statement "90 years working for social justice".

In a number of countries, tripartite events were used for urging their governments to ratify all up to date ILO Conventions and amend national legislation and policy to reflect this. Commitments were made to pursue decent work for all in national policies, and contribute to a fairer distribution of globalization outcomes.

The Belgian Deputy Prime Minister announced that decent work would be an important theme for its forthcoming EU presidency. Other speakers referred to the tasks ahead for the ILO to be effective for another 90 years, namely to continue promoting the application of the core labour standards, to integrate ILO policies more widely into the multilateral system, including the G20 process, and to provide intellectual leadership in labour and social questions, for example, in the United Kingdom and other countries.

In practically all activities, reference was made to the global crisis and the importance of adhering to the principle of social justice, applying the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda to mitigate the impact of the crisis, and working towards new scenarios for a fair globalization. Several countries highlighted the ILO's strong response to the crisis and saw this as being linked to the ILO's own history and its capacity to adapt and modernize in order to respond effectively to new challenges.

To conclude, I would like to thank all our constituents, partners and the ILO staff who have worked hard at making this 90th anniversary celebration a success in our region. It became evident that, after 90 years of joint work, many people are truly committed to this Organization and the values it represents. Indeed, I think we can concur with our Director-General that these local dialogues will have global significance and impact.

The PRESIDENT

This has been a remarkable presentation, and the video we have seen celebrates the spirit of tripartism that is so unique to the Organization. I should like to thank all who were involved.

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The PRESIDENT

I shall now ask the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr Somavia, to take the floor to present his Report to the Conference, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

My congratulations to Minister Hossain for his election as President of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference and, of course, we highlight his relationship with the ILO throughout the years.

I was a bit taken by surprise because Mr Rapacki, Chairperson of the Governing Body, referred to the fact that I had been re-elected. I was not planning to do so, but since he has mentioned the fact, I just want to thank all of you. I feel the support that you gave me and I have the obligation, the moral obligation, to thank you very, very much.

Dear friends, we meet at a time when we have abruptly moved from an era of changes to a change of era. The first systemic crisis of the global economy. We are tested by history and we must respond, as did our forebears, with our values, our vision, our commitment and our convictions, and this is the guidance we receive from the 90th anniversary, recalling our own past so convincingly, but also recalling our duties of today.

Last March, the Governing Body placed the ILO response to the crisis at the heart of this Conference, and I have to thank publicly the Officers of the Governing Body for the extraordinary work that they did in November last year, in March this year and in producing the changes that have made this Conference centre on this crisis. I also thank the Employers' group, which was very active in ensuring this result.

So you have now decided to establish a Committee of the Whole to address the crisis. The Office was also instructed to organize a summit event. More than ten Presidents and five Vice-Presidents have confirmed their participation, together with many heads of trade unions and employer organizations and international personalities.

So what does this mean? It means that tripartism has decided to assume, that you have decided to assume a collective responsibility to make the ILO's voice heard loud and clear, by tackling the global jobs crisis with a decent work approach. Before I address these paramount issues, I want to highlight other significant questions on our agenda.

Gender equality and non-discrimination are foundational values of this Organization. We want decent work and fulfilling lives for all working women and men, in all workplaces and in society at large. Much progress has been made in policies, legislation and awareness, but there is not enough implementation, so we must persist – keep the foot on the accelerator. Crafting paths of sustained and measurable progress for women and men within the realities of each society, particularly in times of crisis is the challenge facing the Committee on Gender Equality, and I look to strong outcomes pointing the way forward. Let me just take the opportunity to mention again that I think we certainly have to concentrate on the need to increase the participation of women in delegations to the Conference. If that Committee could do something about it, suggest

some targets or at least discuss it, I would be very happy. I think that it is necessary for the balance of our Conference. I also want to say that there is an excellent gender stand outside, which I think you will be very interested in seeing.

Your Conference is considering a recommendation on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. Through the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, constituents, together with UNAIDS and other partners, can sustain progress in combating the HIV pandemic, and we cannot let the current crisis erode our collective effort needed in every country – and I want to underline – *every country*. This is not just a problem of this region or that region. This is in every country of the world. On this your guidance is critical, and again, there is a very important stand outside.

Your Conference is called upon to adopt the Programme and Budget for 2010–11. The Governing Body proposed zero growth in the budget level, with only a modest provision for cost increase of 3.6 per cent. It conveys a strong consensus on the objectives and results to be achieved by the ILO, reflected in the Strategic Policy Framework, as well as the follow-up to the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which underpin the programme and budget proposals.

The proposal before you is built on a financially rigorous results-oriented approach, emphasizing transparency, savings, efficiency and effectiveness. It builds on continuously improved strategic budgeting, as well as management and evaluation capacities, and I am hopeful that the Conference will adopt the budget as proposed.

The Committee on the Application of Standards will examine the report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, which received 1,768 reports from Governments in application of article 22 of the Constitution.

The annual Global Report under the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, examines progress in eradicating forced labour.

Once again, the Conference will consider the unacceptable situation of workers, families and enterprises in the occupied Arab territories, as depicted in my Report. The ILO will continue to play its part to improve their conditions with our tools and within our mandate.

On 12 June 2009 we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). You know, Convention No. 182 has had the fastest ratification in the ILO's history. Only 14 more are needed to achieve universal ratification by all 183 member States. Can you imagine? We are only 14 short. I would plead for those 14 countries to ratify it, because the historical implication that we have a total global agreement on what we have to do with child labour would be fantastic. We will be joined by Senator Tom Harkin of the United States Congress, an early and staunch supporter of our work.

So, dear friends, our 90th anniversary recalls the resiliency, adaptability and creativity of an institution consistently true to its values throughout the monumental changes of these last decades.

We were born out of the social upheavals at the end of the nineteenth century. We have gone through the Great Depression and World War II, through the liberating energy of expanding political

freedom: decolonization, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of apartheid and the consolidation of democracy in so many countries. All of this followed by the emergence of a global economy. These last decades have been difficult for us: dominant economy policy – I would even say dominant economic philosophy – Basically disregarded some of the foundational values of the ILO. They over valued the capacities of markets to self-regulate the economy, undervalued the role of the State public policy and regulations, and devalued respect for the environment, the dignity of work and the social services and welfare function in society.

Progressively, the short-term logic of financial markets undermined the longer-term horizon of real-economy enterprises. But we persisted; we did not give up. We systematically expressed our conviction that in time our values would be proven right. Today, we have seen the collapse of the financial system in advanced countries, generating a global crisis transmitted to the entire world through multiple channels, and, although trade has increased, we are now into 15 years without the political will to close a successful global trade negotiation. These key drivers of globalization are facing tough times. In the meantime, the Decent Work Agenda and the quest for a fair globalization have become global goals of the international community. We should be proud of having stood our ground, but we know well the extent of the decent work deficit in the world.

We have been critical of something that was going wrong, so now we have the responsibility to help build a fair and sustainable global economy: an open economy for open societies, where sustainable enterprises and decent work can thrive. Not just critics, but builders. The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which denounced five years ago the dangers in the imbalances of the world economy, issued useful recommendations. We will need to revisit these issues, but now we must concentrate on the crisis.

So here we are again, dear friends, at another moment in history where the ILO can make a difference – tested once more. The Declaration that you adopted last year was visionary. It makes it clear that social justice for a fair globalization must guide the ILO's stance on the crisis. Our immediate task is to fashion a strong tripartite agreement on a decent work response. This is what the possible global jobs pact is about. It is for you in this Conference to shape it, to fashion it, to give it life, to give it the strength of your convictions and of your agreement.

So what does the data tell us? Forty-five million people, mostly young persons, women and men, will enter the labour market in 2009. This means that we need around 300 million new jobs up to 2015, just to keep up with the increase in the labour force. But things are going in the opposite direction: the global economy will contract about 1.3 per cent in 2009, mainly in the developed world.

Global unemployment is projected to continue rising at least until 2010, maybe 2011: in 2009, between 39 and 59 million new unemployed. Businesses in all countries are operating under stress, many at reduced capacity. Bankruptcies are growing exponentially. Poverty and informal employment are rising, as you know, reversing recent gains, and middle classes are weakening. Every-

body is affected, but the impact is different across countries and regions and social conditions.

There are early and welcome signs that the downturn may be losing speed, the freefall being tempered. The G20 leaders at the London Summit took bold decisions to stem the downturn in the world economy, and I welcome these decisions. Yet, most analysts predict that, when it comes, recovery will be slow, possibly lasting several years. Much will depend on the success of overall economic and social policies and stimulus packages adopted by countries, and again on having a functioning financial sector – very important data. We know from past crises that employment recovers to pre-crisis levels with a lag of between four and five years on average. I say on average, because you will see in my Report many examples of countries that were able to do it quicker and a number of countries that took much longer; but four to five years – that is a lot of time when the economy is going down.

So all of these put together mean that the world may be looking at a jobs and social protection crisis of six to eight year's duration, between the downturn that we already have, the lag time and all the people coming into the labour market. And I think that not enough attention has been paid by political leaders to the human and social implications of this lag. It is dangerous to begin saying “ah, we see elements of growth coming back”, without realizing that jobs will take a long time to come back, and the political and social implications of that are very serious. I think that one of our functions is to say “we've got a problem, but we also have a solution”. This is what this Conference is about.

So putting people first, not just saying it but doing it, has to be our priority. We must approach the crisis with a basic sense of solidarity with the most vulnerable. Also, conviction among countries that working together in partnership in coordination is much better than short-term inward-looking policies.

I think that feelings of unfairness run high. The global economy has derailed. Some were sleeping at the wheel, but we all crashed. The costs of the crisis are widely distributed, but benefits of earlier growth were highly concentrated. So there is a legitimate anger brewing out there, certainly, in workers worldwide, but also in many entrepreneurs. You can feel it, but there is also fear. The little there was yesterday is no longer assured today, and tomorrow looks uncertain.

Lack of jobs and social protection breeds instability. Ferments of violence, social unrest, political turmoil multiply. The United States Director of National Intelligence recently stated that “the primary near-term security concern of the United States is the global economic crisis and its geo political implications”, and this is valid globally. So I think that we have to be clear. We cannot afford the risk of economic recovery without a decent work recovery.

So, what do I see as our responsibility? I think that the tripartite responsibility is to propose policies that can significantly reduce this potential six-to-eight-year period of a depressed labour market. Why should we take it as a given? Don't we have the power to define policies that can shorten that period? And we know that it can be done. To do so, the ILO has put itself in crisis mode since October last year.

Our first political conclusion is that the Decent Work Agenda is fully relevant to address the crisis.

We asked ourselves, “Well, how are people reacting to the crisis?”, and what came back is that people are worried about jobs, social protection, dialogue and negotiation and rights at work. They described the Decent Work Agenda as part of their preoccupations with what is happening to their lives in terms of the crisis. And as a result we are working with constituents in many countries on emergency crisis policies.

In November 2008, the Officers of the Governing Body issued a statement on six priority areas in responding to the crisis – beyond the financial institutions, the first international organization to say “look, we have an idea of the direction in which we want to go”. In March 2009, the Governing Body held a wide-ranging discussion on areas of policy convergence that could be considered in a possible global jobs pact. Proposals came out of tripartite meetings in the regions held between January and April 2009, including the regular European Regional Meeting. Five meetings organized between October and May 2009 highlighted the sectoral dimension of the crisis, on which, I think, we would have to concentrate as a move forward. And the ILO contributed to the G20 London Summit and the G8+6 Labour and Employment Minister's Meeting in Rome, both in March 2009.

As you can see, we have been pretty busy. So, what are the implications of all of this? That all of the above flows into the elements of a global jobs pact submitted for your discussion and your decision, for you to agree on its shape and form. Let me list some of them: promoting tripartite consultations on recovery policies; reinforcing active labour market policies; safeguarding viable jobs; supporting jobseekers; expanding employment guarantee schemes, with special attention to young people and vulnerable groups; supporting sustainable enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises; protecting workers' rights; acting against discrimination at work; promoting international labour standards, particularly collective bargaining to address wage deflation; job-intensive investment in infrastructure and public goods; investing in tomorrow's green economy; investing in food security and rural development; extending social protection and supporting pension systems; restructuring of enterprises through social dialogue; and dealing fairly with migrant workers.

An important aspect of this – and we can certainly add other issues – is that on each one of these issues, is that there is a variety of ILO policy tools and practices, but most important, there are also multiple national examples of successful implementation as we speak today. So, what does it mean? That there are instruments that can reduce the gap if we decide to concentrate on it. If we decide to let things go, of course, that gap will continue – we don't know – six to eight years and maybe more. So I call on you, the tripartite International Labour Conference, the highest governance instance of the ILO, to shape and fashion *your* Global Jobs Pact as a national, regional and global initiative to help workers, families and enterprises weather the first systemic crisis of the global economy and build the foundations of a decent work path to recovery and sustainable growth.

Let me just refer to some of its salient features. First, it is a collective policy commitment by you, by the ILO's tripartite constituency, to make employment and social protection an essential objec-

tive – a targeted goal of all economic and social policies and of extraordinary stimulus and recovery packages, underpinned by the tool of social dialogue and respect for rights at work. This would give urgent effects – implementation in a crisis context – to the existing commitment of the 2005 United Nations World Summit, which gave strong support to fair globalization and the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Second, it is a comprehensive approach, a portfolio of tried and tested policies, available to all parties wanting to adopt them. It is not a “one size fits all” solution, but a set of practical policy options to choose from, for national and international decision-making.

Adopted in a comprehensive fashion, these policies can reduce social tensions, protect people in the downturn, but also, very importantly, stimulate aggregate demand. It has an economic implication. It has a very strong economic capacity to stimulate aggregate demand and prepare the growth of the future.

I think that it will be essential to maintain development cooperation commitments and provide additional concessional credit lines to enable Africa and least developed countries to cushion the crisis and actually be able to apply these types of policies.

Third, the Pact is a productive vision to tackle the crisis through investment and enterprise promotion. As we know, the financial system lost its way. We cannot go back to business as usual. We need a financial system that is well regulated, manages risks appropriately and is at the service of the real economy, so it can create sustainable enterprises and decent work.

Fourth, it is an ILO contribution to stronger policy convergence and coherence internationally, within the UN system and with the Bretton Woods institutions.

It will also help us respond to the informal request of G20 countries, which called on the ILO, working with other relevant organizations – and we are already doing that – to assess the actions taken and those required for the future. We have a similar request from the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations. Our opinion is being requested outside these walls. One of the ways to respond is pre-

cisely with the agreements that you will reach in this Conference.

Fifth, about resources. This is not just about how much more governments may need to spend but how they concentrate policies on the issues that people care for. Each country will have to decide how many resources to put behind these policies but, at the same time, Bretton Woods institutions, development cooperation and the United Nations system must play a reinforcing role.

Finally, the pact is not an international legal obligation. It is an agreement on common policy approaches, eventually leading to national and international programmes.

In all of this, the fundamental part of what I want to say today, I seek your guidance on how you expect the Office to assist you. We will certainly need to reinforce and deepen our capacities in some areas to respond to your needs.

So, dear friends, let me conclude. Throughout its history the ILO has dug deep into its values to propose realistic solutions that advance the cause of peace and social justice. Our institution is again at a defining moment.

Our values and our beliefs are a good compass for this crisis and we are here assembled to rise to the challenge. Together, I have no doubt we will succeed, so that tomorrow, or ten years from now, when we celebrate the ILO’s century, delegates sitting in this same Conference can look back at us and say, with pride: our predecessors were once again tested by history and they were up to it. The ILO is stronger because of what they did. Of course, of what you will do.

So, dear friends, thank you so much. We have a historic opportunity in front of us.

The PRESIDENT

Thank you Mr Somavia, for a clear presentation of the issues. I have no doubt that your words will guide discussions, both in the plenary discussions and in the Committees of the Whole, as the Conference undertakes the critical task of determining the ILO’s response to the global crisis.

The second sitting of this session of the Conference is now closed.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.25 p.m.)

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