

**Ninth sitting**

Friday, 12 June 2009, 10.05 a.m.

Presidents: Mr Allam and Mr Zellhoefer

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT (Mr ALLAM)

I hereby declare the ninth sitting open. First, I would like to give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference for an announcement.

The CLERK OF THE CONFERENCE

I should like to inform the Conference that the ILO is commemorating the World Day against Child Labour and the tenth anniversary of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), with two events today. The first is a brief solidarity event that will take place with schoolchildren from local schools, civic leaders from the City and Canton of Geneva and other guests. This will be held in the Place des Nations outside the UN building from 2 to 2.45 p.m. The second will take place at a ceremony this afternoon, here in plenary, starting at 3 p.m., with a number of guest speakers and a musical interlude. The general discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General will continue both before and after the ceremony on the World Day against Child Labour and the tenth anniversary of Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

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

Original Arabic: The PRESIDENT

We shall now resume the general discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Original French: Mr VEYRIER (*Worker, France*)

In the nineteenth century, Victor Hugo identified the risks that liberal capitalism posed to society. In his novel, *Les Misérables*, referring to the collapse of the economy of a commune and of his region, related how corners were cut, prices brought down, trust destroyed, markets closed, orders fell away, wages diminished, workshops lay idle, bankruptcy struck and then there was nothing left for the poor.

I believe that that is an opposite description of the process which, at the global level, has led to the current crisis being suffered by workers throughout the world.

Is this not the result of a system where the market economy actually became a dogma, called the "Washington Consensus", where any regulation was seen as a hindrance that imposed labour costs – wages, labour regulation, social protection – and where the public sector was just an expense? A sys-

tem where the wealth redistributed to the workers and solidarity were diminished and flowed to capital that fuelled speculation. A system that destroyed the productive economy.

No one should be surprised. In 2004, the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization highlighted the fact that wealth was being distributed unequally.

The breadth and implacability of this crisis have meant that governments have had to act quickly by coming to the aid of their banking systems and devising stimulus plans through increased public debt.

State intervention and public finance, which were contested and even banished by the advocates of the liberal economy in the context of workers' rights, have suddenly been accepted.

But, on behalf of workers and those populations which throughout all these years have suffered this burgeoning inequality and are being hard hit today and thrown into uncertainty about their future and that of their children, we cannot content ourselves with taking minimum measures to get through the brunt of the worst crisis.

Workers should not have to suffer today the consequences of the crisis and pay tomorrow the cost of the measures taken to get out of the crisis. There has to be a root and branch change of the system. The tools and policies to do this are available. We have been developing them within the ILO ever since it was established in 1919 in the name of social justice.

The time has come to give the ILO and its system of international labour standards a leading role in how the economy is planned. The ILO has legitimacy because it represents 182 countries and is based on a tripartite dialogue. It should be given the necessary authority to carry out its role in this crisis and to put the world's economic system on the right tracks.

That is how we see the real challenge of the Global Jobs Pact. It must be based on the respect of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Tripartite social dialogue should not just be a fig leaf for the crisis. Neither should it be mortgaged to the same policies on restructuring and flexibility which have weakened social guarantees and protection in the past.

The expectations and rights of workers must be taken into account. The trade unions must be free to express their ideas and negotiate their demands.

It is vital that we be consistent, a quality sorely lacking in government policies, both at the national

level and within other institutions of the multilateral system, with the commitments made within the ILO. We have to remove the financial, budgetary and trade conditionalities that have prevailed thus far, so that we can bring about social progress and rights.

We need a strong political push for the ratification and effective implementation of fundamental standards – some large countries have still not ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – and Conventions concerning wages, policies, job security, social security and working time. While we must adopt the ILO programme and budget proposals, we also have to be consistent by increasing the ILO's resources.

This Conference has to live up to the expectations of workers and their trade unions and populations in terms of social justice.

Mr OPIO (*Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda*)

My congratulations go to the Director-General and the entire International Labour Organization for the 90th anniversary of its existence and for continuing to defend social justice and fair globalization as the key drivers for the future.

The Director-General's Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, signals the need to rethink the initial belief that liberalization would be good for growth and, through a trickle-down effect, eventually be beneficial for all. The timeliness of the Report lies, not only, in that it highlights the causes and transmission mechanisms of the crisis, but also, in that it proposes a Global Jobs Pact mobilizing all tripartite partners. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the Report and the Global Jobs Crisis Summit, with regional panel discussions on the different labour market aspects, as part of the Conference deliberations. The Summit will enable us to share our experiences with other countries.

For Africa, the financial and economic crisis comes at a time when the country is just beginning to recover from the effects of the food and fuel crisis. The implications are measurable in the overall impact on economic and employment growth. In Africa, the financial crisis will reverse the modest gains achieved in poverty reduction and the opportunities of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In 2007 and 2008 the continent's economies grew at 6.2 per cent and 5.2 per cent, respectively. The International Monetary Fund forecast indicates that Africa's growth will drop to a low rate of 3.4 per cent in 2009.

The effect of the economic crisis differs from country to country, depending on the economic structure. In Uganda, the economy has been growing at a rate of 9 per cent per year; recently it dropped to 7.2 per cent. In an economy where 4.4 million people are employed in the informal sector and a modest 0.6 per cent of the labour force in the formal sector, and where over 390,000 new entrants join the labour market each year, generating sustainable employment for all has been a great challenge. The Government of Uganda has, therefore, taken proactive measures, including expediting the evolution of a new five-year National Development Plan with the theme, "Growth, employment and prosperity for all". Among others, social partners, civil society organizations, youth and students have

made inputs to this process. A draft national employment policy has been finalized following wide consultations and participation of all the stakeholders. Through the Programme for Modernization of Agriculture, the Government is raising income for the peasants, who constitute 80 per cent of the population. Thirty thousand farmers are transformed into commercial small-scale producers every year. The transformed households act as models within their communities.

In line with the goal of the Decent Work Agenda for Africa 2007/2015, the Government of Uganda, with all stakeholders, developed a Decent Work Country Programme, 2007/2010. My delegation proposes that the Decent Work Country Programme should be amplified to incorporate the effects of the financial crisis and recovery strategies. Aware that the effects of the crisis will be borne mostly by youth and women, the Government of Uganda is putting great emphasis on skills training and entrepreneurship. Together with the East African member States, Uganda embarked on the process of developing a country paper on issues, strategies and best practices on youth employment and poverty reduction. The objective is to develop a model instrument for the countries in the East African Community. My delegation notes the Report on Gender Equality and Decent Work as a source of inspiration for furthering this initiative.

To underpin these measures, the Government of Uganda will intensify social dialogue and tripartite consultations and the establishment of an early warning system to inform all parties on how to deal with the crisis along the way.

The greatest challenge is financing the Global Jobs Pact at the national level. The economic recession has provoked a development crisis that requires cooperation from all actors. While national governments have the responsibility to provide funding for the development and implementation of national policies and programmes, the effect, magnitude and dimension of the financial crisis goes beyond the capacities of any national government of member States.

My delegation therefore calls upon the ILO, Bretton Woods institutions and other development partners to join efforts with national governments to help us access funding for implementation of the Global Jobs Pact.

To conclude, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the ILO for the technical and financial support to various development programmes. Finally, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Uganda to the ILO objectives, the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Decent Work Agenda.

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

It is a pleasure for me, on behalf of the Arab Republic of Egypt, to address the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference, and I would like to convey my sincere greetings to all the participants, to Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, and the staff of the Organization. I congratulate them on the 90th anniversary of the ILO. I would like to thank them for their excellent efforts in preparing the Report submitted to us, entitled *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work*. I would also like to commend their

outstanding work in organizing the Global Jobs Summit, in which I will have the honour to participate in a few days.

I would like to make a few comments on the Report of the Director-General.

Firstly, the Report is of special importance, as it deals comprehensively with the social dimensions of the global financial crisis, the detrimental effects of which are continuing to be felt in the countries of the world. It warns us that for some countries, particularly the developing and least developed countries, the situation will worsen over this year and the next. The Report emphasized certain facts that we are all aware of: that the origins of the crisis lie in weak governance and inadequate regulation of the financial markets of industrialized countries, while the effects of the crisis are hitting developing countries hard, especially those with the least resources to deal with it.

I would like to confirm Egypt's view that we need to address the current crisis in a spirit of responsibility and genuine partnership at the international level, through mechanisms for direct representation of all the members of the international community, and not through the machinery established to deal with the previous crisis, which was limited in scope. We consider that it would be a mistake of historic proportions for the international community and its institutions to treat the South, the developing and least developed as if they were doling out charity; rather, the focus should be on the development agenda, as the real engine of the global economy.

Secondly, in Egypt we have acted quickly to mitigate the effects of the crisis, giving priority to protecting low-income groups and those hardest hit by the crisis. We have adopted a package of measures and policies combining economic, financial and social instruments, ensuring that decisions are taken in consultation with the social partners and other stakeholders in order to guarantee the legitimacy of these policies and uphold the principles of social dialogue that we have all accepted, and strengthen transparency. Our national programme, which we are developing in coordination with the ILO, is based on the tripartite machinery provided for in the Egyptian Labour Code.

Thirdly, despite the economic reforms carried out by the Egyptian Government, many sectors of the economy have been hit by the crisis. Production has dropped and the private sector share in investment has plummeted because of tighter restrictions on credit, which has led to a drop in export revenues. In addition, revenues from the Suez Canal have fallen because of the decline in global trade and traffic.

The impact of the crisis on the developing and least developed countries appears to have a dual nature: it challenges our efforts to achieve development goals, fight poverty, and develop labour markets and social services, in the light of limited local resources, all in an international context that is far from encouraging. To mention a few examples, the World Bank estimates that the volume of international trade will drop by 6 per cent in 2009, while the WTO expects a decline of 9 per cent, and the OECD is forecasting a drop of more than 13 per cent, with all that this implies for developing countries. The International Finance Institute expects capital flows to drop by 82 per cent in 2009, while the World Bank considers that 84 per cent of developing countries will face deficits of between US\$270 and US\$700 billion. The IMF expects the

shortfall of low-income countries to reach US\$25 billion in 2009.

This will have repercussions on jobs, and will increase unemployment and poverty. As the Director-General pointed out in his Report, in the worst-case scenario as regards unemployment – and we agree that there are indications that the figure will be greater – by the end of 2009 there could be an increase in global unemployment of more than 50 million.

This represents a challenge to humanity in every region of the world, an appeal to the conscience of humanity as a whole, and a call to the international community to take the issue seriously. For us in developing countries, we face a direct challenge in regard to the availability of the capital needed for infrastructure to maintain the economy and demand in the short term and curb unemployment and poverty.

We are convinced that the international organizations should create an enabling international climate to help the tripartite social partners to devise an effective response, in accordance with national specificities, to deal with the crisis, and to enable the developing countries in particular to continue their reforms.

Before concluding, I would like to refer to the Report of the Director-General concerning the situation of Arab workers of the occupied Arab territories, and to express my thanks to the Organization for its efforts to help the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories in the West Bank, Gaza and Al-Quds and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. Once again, we express our utter rejection of the discriminatory and repressive policy and practices of the Israeli occupying authorities against the workers in the occupied Palestinian territories, and condemn the brutal military aggression recently perpetrated by Israel against Gaza, causing the deaths of thousands of unarmed civilians, including women and children, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless, and destroying houses, factories and infrastructure in general, as well as public services, exacerbating poverty and unemployment and undermining social services and decent work.

We call on all institutions of the international community, donors and international organizations to provide the necessary resources in support of the plan of the Palestinian Authority adopted at the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza in Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2009.

Mr SIELE (*Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Botswana*)

Let me point out from the outset that it is befitting that this Conference should be discussing, among other things, the global jobs crisis. The discussion on this issue is a clear acknowledgement of the circumstances that we, as constituents of the ILO, find ourselves in as a result of the current global economic meltdown. And workers, employers and governments, who make up the constituents of the ILO, are among those most adversely affected by the global economic crisis.

Enterprises are closing down because they are unable to continue operating due to the weak demand for their products and services. Workers are at the receiving end as they are subjected to retrenchments and layoffs. As the returns to enterprises are dwindling, so are taxes payable to governments.

Consequently, governments are unable to fully deliver the required services to the people.

The Report of the Director General, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work*, explicitly states that there could be an increase in global unemployment of more than 50 million workers by the end of 2009. Many more are also expected to be pushed into extreme poverty by the end of the year.

We are obviously heading for the worst employment crisis in living memory. For us in the developing countries, this state of affairs only serves to aggravate the already dire situation of high unemployment and poverty. As a result, developing countries, in particular, need special attention. What is even more worrisome is the apparent reversal of the progress made by our countries in terms of economic and social progress. Without social and economic progress, we cannot be optimistic about political stability in our countries. We therefore have every reason to be worried.

The ILO has a duty to assist its constituents to cope with the global employment crisis. This is in line with its mandate and the expectations of the Government, workers and employers in my country and all other members gathered here.

The challenge confronting us is to come up with strategies that can be used to mitigate the impact of the global jobs crisis. In my view, the ILO has, over the years, laid a solid foundation for our action in this regard by pursuing the Decent Work Agenda. Effective strategies for dealing with the jobs crisis require investment in the promotion of employment, social dialogue, fundamental rights at work and a strong social protection base.

By upholding the ideals of social justice and fair globalization as key drivers for the future, the ILO has further consolidated the basis for fair distribution of the benefits of globalization, thereby minimizing the imbalances between countries. We thus need to jealously guard the progress that has so far been made in the promotion of decent work and a fair globalization.

The Report of the Director-General also gives insights into the responsibilities of the ILO, and these provide a very useful basis for deliberations at this Conference. Certainly, the escalating demands for services of the ILO and diminishing resources call for prioritization and trade-offs. In other words, this is the time to be even more innovative.

My delegation welcomes the discussion on forced labour and HIV/AIDS in the world of work. These issues present enormous challenges. The cost of forced labour is not only unjustifiable in modern society, but also unsustainable. With regard to HIV/AIDS, I entirely agree that the move from a code of practice to an instrument is overdue.

In conclusion, my delegation is optimistic that the exchange of views and ideas at this Conference will be beneficial to the ongoing discussions on rationalizing the activities of this Organization, enriching the quality of its work and maximizing the utilization of the resources at its disposal.

Original Portuguese: Mr VIAGE (Worker, Angola)

We, the Angolan workers, are very proud of the peace in our country and we voted massively in the elections in September 2008 in order to reinforce the democratic climate in our country. We believe that democracy is a stabilizing factor in the process of reconciliation in our country. It is also a strong

influence for speedy economic and social recovery and with regard to the workers' commitment to rebuild the basic, productive and social infrastructure that will be so important to helping rapid growth in future in all sectors of our country.

The economic and financial crisis, which is the central theme of this Conference, has put a damper on our enthusiasm and affected most countries, which are experiencing a slowdown in their economies.

It goes without saying that the crisis has also affected our country and hence our Government has established an action plan to try and reduce its impact. We have looked at macroeconomic policies, which we hope will be able to curb the recession and create moderate economic growth, hopefully at a rate higher than the growth rate of our population, namely above 3 per cent per year.

In order to achieve that goal, the Government has published a number of what can only be called austerity measures to try and bring public spending under control. The aim is to reduce public spending by 35 per cent, reschedule public investment, accelerate efforts to stabilize public companies, inject state aid into the diamond industry to ensure projectability, and step up diversification of the economy.

We are at the implementation phase of this plan and we are already seeing the economic effects. But the impact of the crisis in all countries will be felt most strongly by the workers themselves, who will bear the brunt of the gradual deterioration in labour relations.

Many firms have gone out of business and many workers have been laid off. Wage increases have been accompanied by staff cuts and government help to shore up public enterprises. Short-term contracts are increasingly used for long-term positions. The prices of goods and services have increased across the board. We have witnessed a reduction in mandatory social benefits payments and the unilateral erosion of legitimately acquired rights.

The National Union of Angolan Workers (UNTA) has welcomed government efforts, albeit with certain reservations, to alleviate the effects of the crisis on the national economy, as well as highlighting the negative impact on workers' lives.

Hence we have called upon the Government to reflect carefully on the ways in which it will seek to reduce its spending by 35 per cent, so that there will be no erosion of subsidies for fuel, transport, energy and water, which would be very likely to threaten social peace.

UNTA feels that, at this time of crisis, employers in general, and the Government in particular, have an extra responsibility to maintain the social harmony and peace of the labour market. They must ensure respect for labour laws, promote social dialogue and consultation, refrain from unilateral disregard of acquired rights, and safeguard workers' jobs and wages.

UNTA, as a partner of the Government and the employers, will strive to mobilize the workers and increase their awareness, so that a new attitude towards work will contribute towards saving jobs, reducing waste, and improving discipline and skills, both essential to the economic and financial effectiveness of companies.

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

I wish to congratulate the ILO for focusing the Conference this year on strategies for dealing with the impact of the international financial crisis, especially on developing and vulnerable countries.

In Jamaica, we have established a multi-sector committee that includes the major social partners – Government, trade unions and employers – to develop mitigation strategies for dealing with job losses resulting from the worldwide financial meltdown. This committee used the Decent Work framework to establish recommendations focusing on job creation, employment and social protection. These recommendations have been sent to a national social partnership committee for consideration and action.

The first recommendation is a national training and re-skilling programme focused on employability during the crisis and for job opportunities after the crisis. This programme is targeted at three important groups: displaced workers; unemployed youths in the 18–25 age group; and persons to be prepared for job opportunities related to major national development projects and overseas employment.

The second is a public education programme for productivity for international competitiveness and employment relations.

A crucial component of this programme is working with organizations and agencies in both the public and private sectors to re-engineer their systems for increased productivity and reduction of waste.

The third is a special job creation strategy to deal with unemployment. A key aspect of this is major investment and infrastructure development projects that can generate jobs in a wide range of skill areas – from low- to high-level specialized skills.

The fourth recommendation deals with special social protection schemes (including health) and benefits for unemployed persons.

As stated before, these recommendations are currently under consideration for action.

The development of these recommendations benefited from the conclusions of the Committee on Skills in the 2008 session of the International Labour Conference, which considered the link between skills, improved productivity, employment growth and development from the individual, business enterprise and national perspectives.

However, if Jamaica is to implement these recommendations successfully in the context of this crisis, we will need the support of both the ILO and international financial institutions. We therefore applaud the efforts of the ILO to focus the attention of international bodies and the special Summit of the G20 leaders, held on 2 April 2009, on policy coherence. The achievement of this will facilitate the provision of financial assistance and technical cooperation support to assist with economic development, job creation and employment, together with social safety nets.

Developing countries like Jamaica will then be in a better position to find a meaningful solution to both the economic and social recessions.

Let me close by congratulating the Director-General for the excellent background paper entitled *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, and the proposal for a Global Jobs Pact, which, as stated, “addresses the im-

mediate needs of formal and informal economy workers, families and enterprises”.

We look forward to the analysis and recommendations arising from earlier discussion of these papers at the Conference.

We also anxiously await the recommendations from two special sets of deliberations: the special ILO Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis and the Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses, convened to discuss the employment policy consequences of the global financial and economic crisis.

Our hope is that the conclusions from these discussions will assist us as we struggle with great urgency during this period of crisis to find effective initiatives for job creation, employment and sustainable development.

Original French: Mr LAURIJSSEN (Government, Belgium)

The Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities, Joëlle Milquet, regrets not having been able to attend this Conference, but does send her warmest regards.

Belgium firmly supports the ILO’s efforts on several fronts where the world of work is suffering from the current political and economic circumstances, namely the economic crisis, discrimination at work, anti-union violence and the living and working conditions in the occupied Arab territories. Our constant concern remains the same: we need to ensure that, across the board, the world of work is able to receive operational support from the Office.

In the context of the economic crisis, the Office’s contribution is based on a conviction that appropriate solutions will not come about through looking inwards. Turning to industrial and social protectionism would be an abandonment of the reforms that pave the way to the future and lay the foundations for sustainable economic development.

In that regard, we commend the Office for the expertise it is developing in the field of green jobs and we encourage it to continue down this road. We would like to make an appeal for the greater coordination of policies because cooperation between States can facilitate a way out of the crisis: the plans of one State can have an impact in other States.

The Global Jobs Pact should be structured around the decent work objectives and, on the basis of examples of best practice and experiences that will have been assessed as requested by the Group of 20 (G20), should point to several options for appropriate measures. We need to convince the next G20 meeting that the Pact is an essential platform for the coordinated global governance of employment. It is on that condition that the ILO will be invited to attend. If that operation is a success, then a new global economic governance will begin. For their part, governments and social partners should be able to find in this Global Jobs Pact various solutions to ensure that professional transition can be a constructive experience for workers and the unemployed in terms of requalification and vocational training.

Belgium notes that many countries are attempting to fine tune their provisions against discrimination, particularly in hiring. The Committee of Experts has highlighted recent legislation in my country as an example of progress. Indeed, non-discrimination is, in our eyes, an essential condition for healthy enterprises, for labour markets that guarantee the dignity of all, and for productive work and social cohesion.

We believe that work done on the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world of work will make a subs-

tantial contribution to the culture of non-discrimination. We fully share the view that, once we have non-discriminatory hiring, the world of work can make a strategic contribution to general policies for the prevention of health risks.

Our delegation remains outraged by the cases of violence in many countries, particularly in Colombia and Guatemala, which leads to anti-union practices and assassinations. We continue to hope, despite evidence to the contrary, that those involved will one day realize the valuable contribution to peace and economic and social development made by social dialogue, based on mutual recognition, freedom of association and collective bargaining. Instead of fearing this development, governments should consolidate the national legal framework for social dialogue. Our delegation welcomes the fact that the Office has reorganized its provisions for supporting labour management and social inspections.

To conclude, my delegation would like the new Report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories to be given the necessary attention. We dare to believe that the ILO's technical assistance, with the political and financial backing of several countries, will be able to give hope, especially to the young people in this region, thanks to effective interventions to develop their skills and their enterprising spirits. This will only be possible, as the Report points out, in a peaceful environment without any barriers or intimidating pressure; in an environment where employment opportunities may be created and where hope may take hold.

Mr DE PAYVA (*Worker, Singapore*)

We congratulate the Director-General of the ILO on his excellent Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, which details what the world needs to do collectively to get out of the global recession and ensure that the future global economy moves towards a fairer globalization that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

We fully support the ILO's call for a Global Jobs Pact to be implemented in every country, focusing on employment and social protection. The ILO encourages the sharing of experiences, good practices and knowledge on measures and actions taken by governments and social partners in responding to the crisis. I would like to take this opportunity to share briefly the Singapore labour movement and its social partners' response to this crisis.

To ride out this severe economic downturn, the Singapore labour movement has resolved to be the "Most Pro-worker Nation", "Most Pro-business Economy", "Most Caring Labour Movement" and "Most United in Tripartism".

The Singapore National Trades Union Congress (SNTUC) desires to be the "Most Pro-worker Nation" by championing fair treatment in the workplace and improving the skills and employability of all workers. We believe that the best welfare we can give a worker is a decent job. Thus, together with our social partners, we have set up the Employment and Employability Institute to minimize unemployment. This Institute helps workers to learn new skills, upgrade their existing skills and find jobs as quickly as possible. It actively canvasses the whole economy for job vacancies and provides a job matching service for the unemployed through weekly job fairs.

When the world economy eventually recovers, the pace at which the Singapore economy will recover will depend on how well we have equipped our workers with new skills that will inevitably be required as companies upgrade to face a new business environment and competition. We strive to make use of this downturn to invest in workers' capabilities for the future by facilitating industry-wide upgrading initiatives to improve service quality, productivity and pay for our workers.

Decent jobs are created when businesses grow and respect workers' rights at work. Thus, the SNTUC aims to be the "Most Pro-business Economy" so that businesses will remain viable, emerge stronger from the downturn and continue to provide decent jobs for our workers. Our highest retrenchment numbers were during the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis when some 29,000 jobs were lost. To avoid setting a new retrenchment record, the social partners issued a set of tripartite guidelines on managing excess manpower, advocating retrenchment only as the last resort. The clarion call is to cut costs to save jobs rather than to cut jobs to save costs. We will work with employers to reduce non-wage components as much as possible. One way is for companies to tap into the government-funded training programme entitled the "Skills programme for upgrading and resilience", to send workers for training, to equip them with new skills and enhance their employability. The Government has also implemented a new initiative, the "Job credits scheme", to subsidize employers' wage bills to encourage retention of workers and implemented many other measures to help businesses to cut costs and preserve jobs. For companies that are in financial dire straits and need cost-cutting measures that will affect workers' wages, the union expects management to lead by example by taking earlier and/or deeper wage cuts than rank and file.

We want to be the "Most caring labour movement" and to do more to help union members even more during this downturn. The SNTUC, together with its affiliated unions and associations, social enterprises, individual corporate partners and organizations, have raised 23 million Singapore dollars to provide members in need and their families with financial assistance and help increase their purchasing power. The SNTUC's 12 social enterprises provide many essential goods and services to union members and workers. They have committed to continuing to play an important role during this downturn by moderating the cost of living and stretching workers' hard-earned money. They have also committed to zero retrenchments and some are in fact expanding their operations and hiring more workers, including fresh graduates, retrenched professionals and back-to-work women. We hope that more companies will emulate the actions of our social enterprises.

The SNTUC resolves to be the "Most united in tripartism". The effective practice of tripartism in Singapore has seen us through many crises in the past. With the continued strong support of our social partners, we are confident that we will ride out this crisis as well.

The crisis is far from over, and there will be much more than we can do to help our workers see through this downturn and emerge stronger. I look forward to learning from the experiences of others at this International Labour Conference. On this note, I wish you all a fruitful Conference.

I would like to express my appreciation for the most informative and timely Report of the Director-General: *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*.

By now there must be very few, if any, countries, economies, communities, employers and workers that have not been affected by the economic and social crisis that we are currently facing. It is therefore very heartening and encouraging to see that the ILO is prepared to take swift and decisive action to assist its constituents in this time of need and to consult on the possible remedies to tackle and address the numerous new challenges we now face.

The Report of the Director-General makes very concrete and practical proposals, which will be ultimately embodied in the establishment of a Global Jobs Pact. The Global Jobs Pact will concretize the concerted action of the ILO, member States, employers and workers to work towards global social and economic development.

I support the concept of a Global Jobs Pact and would like to see it included in our Decent Work Country Programme, which Namibia is in the process of finalizing.

The Report, rightly so, strongly focuses on the paramount role that social protection will play in the implementation of strategies and actions to boost economic recovery and address income earning imbalances. There is a recurring theme that social protection must be strengthened and further developed if inroads are to be made to the social protection crisis currently being experienced. I could not agree more on this.

In addition, the recent third Southern African Development Community (SADC) Meeting of Ministers responsible for Labour and Employment, held in April 2009 in Capetown, South Africa, informed participants that cash transfers have had a major impact on poverty in the SADC region. Specifically, the old-age grants are crucial in reducing poverty. The indirect impact of cash transfers are far reaching and overwhelming.

In view of what I have just alluded to, I do, however, find it contradictory, confusing and disturbing that the ILO Governing Body would see it fit to remove the general discussion on employment and social protection in the new demographic context from the Conference agenda. My inclination was that it was very fortuitous for that discussion to be on the agenda during the current socio-economic climate, given the need to strengthen social protection.

In desperate and challenging times I always like to look for opportunities that can be harnessed to give a silver lining to an otherwise bleak-looking picture. This situation is no different. I believe the global crisis might serve the single significant purpose of uniting governments, employers and workers in social dialogue to face the common adversarial challenge of economic recession.

For social dialogue to succeed in its purpose and rationale, it is an indispensable requirement that all partners participate on an equal footing.

Although there is still much more to be done, I would like to briefly inform you that the Namibian Government is taking a number of steps to address economic growth and employment creation which are, among others, as follows:

- (1) Following the commencement of the global crisis, a Cabinet Committee under the Chair of the Minister of Trade and Industry was created to specifically assess the impact on Namibia and to generate proposals on the way forward.
- (2) The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare very recently submitted the Employment Services Bill to Cabinet for its consideration. The Bill makes provision for the establishment of the National Employment Service. The Service consists of the Employment Service Committee and the Employment Service Bureau. The Bureau must establish and operate the Integrated Employment Information System, with its database, which will regulate private employment agencies.
- (3) The Ministry is also developing a second Bill on the establishment of an Employment Creation Commission. It is broadly envisaged that the Commission will consist of members from the public and private sectors who would be responsible for promoting and implementing employment creation initiatives in Namibia.
- (4) The Ministry has embarked on strengthening its relationship and cooperation with the Namibian Tender Board, which is responsible for public procurement of services and goods. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure the implementation of section 138 of the Labour Act (Act No. 11 of 2007) which states that employers must give a written undertaking that their employees are not employed in conditions less favourable than provided for in the collective agreement or those prevailing for similar work in industry in that region.

This year is of course the first discussion on a possible autonomous recommendation on HIV/AIDS in the world of work. Southern Africa remains the most affected by HIV/AIDS and is at the epicentre of the epidemic. More than 37 per cent of the world's people living with HIV and AIDS live in the SADC region. I am therefore sure I speak for all my colleagues in the SADC region when I say that we are delighted to have this item on the agenda and that we will be following the deliberations closely. It is our hope that, once adopted as a recommendation, the instrument will play a significant role.

Namibia is ready to work with the ILO in achieving the noble concept of decent work. With these few remarks, I would like to conclude by saying that social dialogue delayed is decent work denied.

Original Polish: Mr CHWILUK (Worker, Poland)

The 98th Session of the International Labour Conference is an event of utmost importance. This year we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the International Labour Organization. I am all the more happy to address you on behalf of the Workers' group from Poland because our country was one of the founders of the International Labour Organization in 1919. This means that from the very beginning of the ILO's existence, representatives from Poland helped to forge its achievements. For me, as for all the Polish representatives of the Workers' group, this is a source of great satisfaction.

This session of the International Labour Conference is also an important event for other reasons. The discarding of the basic rules of social protection, as well as the failure to provide public support,

have resulted in the most serious crisis of the world economy since the Second World War. Experience has shown that the economy must serve human beings. The current situation cannot continue. A human being must be considered more important than the market and this was also a guiding tenet of all those who were behind the founding of the ILO 90 years ago.

Every day we hear reports of summary dismissals, the rise in unemployment, human tragedies, and especially the problems facing women and vulnerable groups. Profits from speculation were amassed by the few and yet costs are borne by employees and their families. Threatening employees with layoffs if they do not agree to social concessions is unfair and harks back to nineteenth century capitalism. The perpetrators keep their high remuneration, bonuses and severance pay, whilst demanding sacrifices, wage reductions and belt-tightening from the working population. They avoid a fair diagnosis of the reasons and come up with bogus solutions. Neo-liberalism has egg on its face but neo-liberals are doing very well, thank you very much.

We firmly oppose tax breaks and privileges for the richest. Social economic policy – including fiscal, credit, investment and consumers' measures as well as the incomes of pensioners and benefits from social insurance and social protection – must be predicated on the need to maintain a high level of domestic demand. A decent minimum wage equal to 50 per cent of average earnings must be one of the pillars of the rescue plan.

On behalf of the Workers' group of the Polish delegation I wish to thank the Director-General for including a Committee dealing with the global crisis in the programme of work of the Conference and I wish to thank him for his good Report.

Although any rescue plan must be decided with the social partners, and this is one of the main points of the Director-General's Report, politicians and the media critical of the trade unions in Poland are taking advantage of this time of crisis. We are stereotyped and depicted as unreasonably litigious or ignorant individuals who do not have anything reasonable to say. Instead of a real social dialogue, we are just going through the motions. Although we, together with the employers, have agreed upon a pact for the time of the crisis, the Government clearly prefers solutions that are favourable to employees, avoiding those provisions which are in the interests of workers. Some politicians of the ruling coalition in Poland declare in public, without any self-consciousness, that trade union rights should be curtailed.

I wish to emphasize that we shall not allow the crisis to be used for attacking labour law, demanding restrictions of job security or striving to reduce wages and employee rights. In times of crisis we demand appropriate implementation of all ILO standards.

Mr DUMAS (*Government, Trinidad and Tobago*)

The questions we face today are not only those related to overcoming the current economic and financial crisis, but also how to return to the path of sustainable growth and prosperity. Our recent common experience has revealed the dangers of focusing excessively on opportunistic wealth creation schemes rather than investing in the real economy and by extension, in creating real and sustainable jobs as a basic ingredient of human welfare.

The Director-General's Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, and the discussions at this 98th Session of the International Labour Conference are therefore most timely. These discussions will no doubt assist us in developing and further enhancing existing exit strategies from these extraordinary circumstances and in recapturing economic growth of a quality that strengthens the social fabric and stability of our societies in a sustainable manner.

Over the past year, the threats posed by the global economic crisis to human prosperity, and indeed to human security, and the integral link between human prosperity and decent work have engaged and riveted the attention of our hemispheric and regional leaders and social partners.

At the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held in Trinidad and Tobago in April of this year under the theme, *Securing our citizens' future by promoting human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability*, the leaders of the Americas, in their deliberations on human prosperity, committed to improving the welfare of the people of the Americas by focusing on several core objectives. These included the creation of opportunities for decent work, training the workforce, and reducing poverty, inequality and discrimination. Prior to this, the Caribbean social partners explored ways of promoting human prosperity beyond the crisis at an ILO tripartite Caribbean conference in early April 2009 and adopted nine key principles to guide the regional approach, which included: the implementation of holistic fiscal, employment and macroeconomic policies which promote human rights; development and implementation of active labour market policies that aim to sustain and promote employment; and the protection of the most vulnerable by extending social safety nets.

Later this year, in November, Trinidad and Tobago will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference under the theme *Partnering for a more equitable and sustainable future*. The emphasis on partnership is instructive because the scope and intensity of globalization is now such that the solution to the current crisis requires concerted, coordinated global action to re-stimulate growth and expand job creation in developed and developing countries alike.

The benefits of such dialogue at the international, hemispheric and regional levels are indeed immense and are being realized in Trinidad and Tobago, as every effort is made to translate the outcomes and decisions into a legacy of good governance marked by workable actions, which are incorporated into the national development framework.

It has been said that countries' abilities to cope with, and to overcome, the crisis depends in large measure on their pre-crisis status. Fortunately, as part of its ongoing economic development programme, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had already adopted certain measures, before the onset of the crisis, that have contributed to minimizing its negative effects. Our focus and heavy investment in universal access to education and training from nursery to tertiary levels, including free primary and secondary education and fully paid tuition at the tertiary level, as well as the scaled-up training of our labour force through a range of skills development programmes, have proven very beneficial. Furthermore, through targeted social protection measures such as the conditional cash transfer

programme and the provision of stipends to trainees in selected training modules, we have been able to maintain dignity in people's lives, while positioning them to become, in time, masters of their own destiny and indeed masters of their own dignity.

In responding to the crisis, we recognized that quick and decisive action was needed. One of our first actions was to strengthen the legislative framework governing our financial system in order to secure and protect the interests of all concerned. We have also accelerated our efforts to promote micro, small and medium-size enterprises by embarking on the preparation of a new micro and small enterprise sector development programme. Recognizing the links between wealth creation and productivity, and enhancing productivity remains high on the national agenda in Trinidad and Tobago, in furtherance of which my Government has consulted with our social partners and will soon be establishing a national productivity council.

We firmly believe that decent working conditions ought not to be compromised under any circumstances, especially in times of crisis and, in this regard, steps have been taken to further strengthen our labour administration mechanisms, especially our conciliation, labour inspection and occupational safety and health functions. In addition, the enactment of equal opportunity legislation and the development of a national workplace policy on HIV/AIDS have been significant steps in promoting fundamental rights of equality and freedom from discrimination.

As we commemorate the World Day against Child Labour today, I am pleased to reaffirm my Government's continued commitment to the elimination of all forms of child labour which is evidenced in our National Plan of Action for Children, in the development of a draft policy on the elimination of child labour, and in the review of our legislative provisions.

Social dialogue remains the cornerstone of governance in our labour market. To this end, the Government remains committed to continued collaboration with our social partners.

In closing, I take this opportunity to congratulate the ILO on its 90th anniversary and to thank, in particular, the Director-General and the ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, led by Dr Ana Teresa Romero, for their unswerving support to Trinidad and Tobago and, more generally to the Caribbean region, in our determination to promote decent work.

Mr SHAHMIR (*Government, Islamic Republic of Iran*)

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Dr Seyed Mohammadreza Mavalizadeh, Deputy Minister for Parliament, Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who regrettably missed his flight to the International Labour Conference at the last minute.

Right at the outset allow me to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia, and his officers for holding this landmark Conference. I also wish to praise the Director-General for the preparation of an extensive Report on how to tackle the jobs crisis and particularly for his unfailing commitment in advising us of the dreadful situation of the workers in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

The Director-General's Report and the special arrangement of this Summit being held to address the

dark consequences of the global financial and jobs crisis are indications of deep concerns about the rift and collapse of the global market. The roots of the collapse of credit, trade, production and living standards are associated with the spread of greedy financial capitalism, new economic and social policies which are brutal and harmful and, above all, the extensive globalization which has been unleashed.

As everybody says, a global crisis requires global solutions. The financial trade, economic, employment and social roots of the present global crisis are closely interwoven and so must be the policy response to deal with them. The need to implement a coherent and coordinated job-oriented recovery strategy based on sustainable enterprise as reflected in the Global Jobs Pact is therefore extremely timely and appreciated.

The present crisis is the result of unilateralism and a monopolistic approach to the management of the world. The rather horrifying aftermath of the crisis has revealed once again that no economy in the world is strong enough to withstand it alone. The recurrence of a series of most destructive crises is the harbinger of a very acute malady in the world order, in which the less developed and developing countries are discarded completely in any serious arrangement to redress the situation. The globe seems to be too big to be accommodated in G8 or even G20. The unyielding hegemony and irresponsible and irresponsive financial policies of a limited number of chief industrial states and the World Bank that brought the weaker economies to their knees shall therefore be repelled once and for all.

People in the Bretton Woods institutions must have learned by now that power and pelf do not beget authority alone. Ethics and morality are also part and parcel of the package of power. The sublime aspirations of the Millennium Development Goals have in the meantime turned into a farfetched dream and a fair globalization turned into a Utopia. Elimination of child labour, the eradication of poverty and the extension of social security to the poor would be just a distant promise to the moon, unless the less privileged and long-plundered are given a fair share in the ruling over their destiny. Yet they are doomed to tread on a dark path leading to nowhere but wasteland.

In order to cope with the global financial and jobs crisis, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted certain financial and social security policies to help those most affected and the least privileged to have access to a minimum of protection. Social security coverage has been extended to almost all Iranian farmers and women who are the head of the household in rural areas. The poor, elderly and orphans are constantly provided with sustenance, nourishment and medical care. The young have easy access to low-interest loans and microfinance facilities. Iranian workers enjoy the stock of most lucrative government enterprises and they rely on the unemployment prevention fund that provides a reasonable income at a time of jobs crisis. The Government ensures the sustainability of enterprises by financing employment schemes. Through consultation with our social partners, the Government also manages to support enterprises which have been affected.

A heartfelt debt of gratitude is due to the Director-General, Mr Somavia, and the Office, for the rather impartial Report on the situation of Palestine and other Arab territories.

The Report depicts a dismal human, economic and social situation in occupied Palestine, particularly in Gaza, following the devastating 2008 military invasion by the occupying forces, the scars of which will remain for some time ahead.

The Report also depicts somewhat realistically all the ingredients of a humanitarian catastrophe in the occupied territories, such as closure measures, the 725 km separation wall dismantling the Palestinian social fabric, the continued expansion of intensified Israeli settlement in the occupied territory, violence and its impact on Palestinian livelihood and battered enterprises, leaving tens of thousands of people out of work, and the opaque and restrictive regime of permits which control the movement of persons. May God Almighty bring peace and prosperity to the people of Palestine.

(Mr Zellhoefer takes the Chair.)

Mr MONANI MAGAYA (*Minister of Labour, Public Service and Human Resources Development, Sudan*)

If we look into the agenda of this session, we will recognize that it contains many items which, in spite of their importance, cannot be considered or discussed outside the framework of the implications of the current global crisis in the field of labour.

The crisis forced itself to be the most important element in the discussions and, if we refer to the Director General's Report, we can realize the role and responses of our organization regarding the crisis.

The financial crisis has become a social problem as well, and the Report of the Director-General indicated the impact of the crisis on the labour markets, the increases in unemployment and diminishing of protection, consequently aborting the efforts aiming to eradicate poverty in the world. We expect that it will become a political crisis leading to great unrest and unlimited conflicts.

Sudan participated in the African regional meeting which was organized to exchange views on the crisis and set the appropriate measures to confront its impact. As such, Sudan, which has abundant agricultural resources, has made it a priority to invest in agriculture in particular. To promote this sector, we have constructed dams for water and electricity, roads to other neighbouring countries, communication means and other incentives, as part of the package for promoting and encouraging investment in Sudan.

Our interest in agriculture reflects our care of the rural population, labour and the formal economy. As to the age groups, the concern of Sudan is focused on youth employment, especially graduates, since the phenomenon of unemployment among this category is very high, and particularly so for women. Therefore certain policies and measures were drawn up to tackle this problem.

We believe in the ILO's role and objectives, and we still promote them since joining the ILO. The circumstances of the current global financial and economic crisis have made the international community listen seriously to what the ILO has called for, and appreciated what the ILO has done. So we fully support the efforts of the Director-General and his Office, and we encourage him to continue his work to make a Decent Work Programme the centre of any efforts to rectify and revise the international situation financially, economically and socially.

Moreover, we call upon the Director-General to continue his efforts to promote the principles and programmes of the Organization in the field of social development and equality, and make them the core of international development. We consider the Decent Work Agenda as an opportunity for the international community to deliver its commitments to Africa by promoting workers' rights, supporting sustainable enterprises for better employment, upgrading economic activity in the informal economy, developing social protection systems and encouraging representation and social dialogue.

In our support for these efforts of the Director-General, we made the occasion of celebrating the ILO's 90th anniversary a good opportunity to confirm our adherence to ILO programmes and policies and also to convince others that the ILO is doing work that deserves to be recognized and implemented. Hence our big celebration last April included all government bodies, social partners and the media.

Before leaving this platform, I have to say that Sudan has suffered from a long civil war and ended it with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which became the point of reference for solving all Sudan's political problems, and the agreement is being implemented in a good manner.

Now, with the backing of our African, Arab and Islamic brothers, we are earnestly striving to solve the problem of Darfur. We believe that the solution is imminent. We also think that all the problems in the world, without exception, cannot be solved by armament, but only through dialogue and utilization of resources for the welfare of all, and not by flocking over them.

As Sudan is rich in natural recourses, coveted by many, yet we call upon all to invest in Sudan for mutual benefits, convinced that colonization and exploitation of other resources have been shunned, and now we live in an era of cooperation for the welfare of all.

Lastly, the suffering of the Palestinian workers and people is a serious issue. Moreover this suffering is mounting every day because of the inhumane practices and repression of the Israeli occupation. In this situation of the financial crisis, we hope that the Palestinian workers and their families will get better attention and more assistance from our Organization. We also urge for the establishment of a Palestinian State with its capital at Jerusalem.

Original French: Mr PEDRINA (Worker, Switzerland)

I would like to draw your attention to something which has been recognized as vital in the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, but which risks being relegated amid the concerns of governments and when it comes to defining the key elements of the Global Jobs Pact. I am talking about ensuring that fundamental workers' rights, including trade union rights, are respected, which is the primary task of the ILO. There are worrying signs today that these rights will be steamrolled by the current crisis if we stand idly by. History teaches us that this would have catastrophic social consequences. Let us not forget that one of the main causes of the current crisis stems from dismantling legislation on trade union rights under the Reagan presidency in the United States, which seriously weakened the trade unions and led to a lasting stagnation in pay in real terms, resulting in an explosion of household debt. That is why the change of direc-

tion sought by the American unions and President Obama with the Employee Free Choice Act is something to which this Conference should give its full support.

In Europe, there are storm clouds on the horizon for trade union rights. Last year, four rulings of the European Court of Justice, on the Laval, Viking, Ruffert and Luxembourg cases, seriously diminished trade union rights.

In the Ruffert ruling, the European Court of Justice ordered a German state (*Land*) to pay Polish rates of pay, rather than German rates of pay, to workers posted from Poland, which opens the door to wage deflation and social dumping. This is an attack on the fundamental Conventions of the ILO, such as the Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94), which links the application of the principle of "equal pay for equal work" to the place where the work is carried out. This also opens the door to a rise in xenophobia. How can we be surprised that during the conflict at the Lindsey refinery in the United Kingdom at the end of January this year British workers were brandishing the slogan "British jobs for British workers"? During a crisis this is the best way to ignite social and nationalist sentiments.

We need to change direction. Some 350,000 workers took to the streets in four European capitals in mid-May to demand that the fundamental rights of workers once again take precedence over market freedoms. This principle must be established, including in the Global Jobs Pact.

In Switzerland too, in this current crisis, trade union rights are being called into question. In particular there has been a worrying increase in anti-union dismissals. In February 2009, a saleswoman was dismissed by a department store in Geneva because of her trade union commitments. At the end of April 2009, in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, a large textile machinery company dismissed a trade unionist, who had been chairperson of the works council for many years, after 39 years' loyal service. Finally, in mid-May, two of the biggest newspapers in this country – one in Zurich and one in Berne – dismissed the chairpersons of their works councils. What is the Swiss Government doing in this situation? It is stubbornly ignoring the appeals from the trade unions and the recommendations of the competent bodies of the ILO. As Swiss law does not guarantee protection against anti-union dismissal, the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions submitted a complaint in 2003 alleging violation of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). This was successful and, in November 2006, the competent bodies of the ILO invited Switzerland to guarantee a system of effective protection against anti-union dismissals. The reinstatement of the victims of abuses still does not take place and their dismissals are not annulled. Six years on, the Swiss Government is not moving at all on the pretext that employers are against any reinstatement, as if, in a democracy, the employers had a veto.

For all these reasons, we call on this Conference, in its final decision on the Global Jobs Pact, to place the emphasis on trade union rights. Protecting and promoting those rights is particularly important in the current crisis and in helping us to emerge successfully from it. This holds true not only for developing countries or countries where there is a dictatorship, but also for industrialized countries and

countries such as Switzerland, which like to present themselves to the world as model countries in terms of human rights and democracy.

Original Arabic: Mr RAZZOUK (Government, Lebanon)

I would like to begin by congratulating the Director-General on his Report, which has highlighted essential issues. I would also like to offer my congratulations to the Conference as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Organization.

As we hold the 98th Session of the Conference, the world is experiencing a most serious economic crisis, which is affecting all countries: no country, be they large or small, has been spared. The problem has become so serious that the international community is threatened by catastrophes and revolutions that could be devastating. Everyone is looking anxiously to the future outcome of this crisis.

Unemployment is a characteristic of this century, at a time when employment possibilities are ever fewer and the economy is undergoing a recession. There can be no doubt that globalization is the main cause of this crisis. No one knows how long this crisis will last and what impact it will have on society. The most serious problem, however, is the breakdown of the current social protection systems. The middle class has almost disappeared. Extreme poverty is threatening developing countries that were previously trying to develop their economies and stimulate economic growth.

It is clear that the current crisis has had an effect at all levels, including on the labour market. There are record levels of unemployment. The unstable economic conditions are threatening the lives of workers and their families. No one can doubt that this crisis will have an impact on the fundamental principles and rights at work.

The consequences of the globalization of the market economy include reduced competitiveness and the disorganization of the working class. Globalization did have some positive effects for the businessmen in the private sector as a result of the elimination of the social dimension and the absence of a protective State, without forgetting the benefits resulting from the freedom of the markets and the collapse of traditional industries and the influence of the working class.

Unemployment has become the primary cause for concern for people worldwide and we cannot avoid or postpone the search for effective solutions, for example, the efforts that can be made to increase employment possibilities and to combat illegal immigration.

The Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work addresses the question of discrimination, in all its forms, and contains a number of different measures that should be adopted regarding the promotion of gender equality in the workplace, integrating the principle of non-discrimination and equality within national decent work programmes, the promulgation of better laws and improving the application of those laws, and providing the social partners with effective tools to ensure equality in the workplace.

We wish to highlight the suffering of the Palestinian and Syrian people in the Golan Heights, victims of Israel's attacks, which fly in the face of the fundamental principles and rights outlined in the Report of the Director-General. We would also like to draw attention to Israel's use of cluster bombs in

Southern Lebanon, which have affected the lives and work of farmers in that region.

Collective bargaining should focus on measures to reconcile working life and family life since a stable working life leads to a stable family life. Collective bargaining should also consider the question of equal pay and it is no exaggeration to say that enterprises are responsible for increasing equality, which, in turn, motivates workers to increase productivity.

Collective bargaining should also take into consideration the interests of workers with disabilities who have the right to work. Society must ensure that they have full enjoyment of their rights and promote their complete integration into public life.

It is no exaggeration to say that there is no balance of power between workers and employers and, as a result, workers fear for their future and are in a weaker position, vis-à-vis, their employers. This is to be expected in the absence of balanced and fair social dialogue because of the growth in unemployment and the global recession.

The rights that form the basis of decent work are at risk of being affected by the crisis, and let us not forget the possible decline in the social rights that have been obtained by workers over time. In these conditions, all social partners have all got to understand that an absence of cooperation and coordination will have negative effects on the economic situation. Large international companies, unable to withstand the crisis, are on the verge of bankruptcy and are consequently putting the world of work in a dire situation from which it will be difficult to escape.

The first steps towards recovery are the adoption of sound economic policies that will lead to rapid concrete measures being taken to tackle the crisis and prevent negative consequences for society. My country, Lebanon, despite its small size and lack of resources, has had some success in relation to the crisis by developing a policy based on a solid banking sector and a stable exchange rate of the national currency. Despite the repeated threats and attacks faced by Lebanon, the economy has grown in real terms and companies have carried out collective dismissals or seen their production decrease. This can be traced back to the policies adopted by our central bank in relation to the stability of the money markets, which have been based on the guarantee of transparency in order to attract foreign capital.

We should also highlight the important position held by women in the public and private sectors in Lebanon, at all levels and in different areas. They are accorded special social protection under Lebanese law. The application of equality legislation has allowed women to play an important role in public life; there is no discrimination between men and women in the workplace; and the law grants women the right to look after their husbands and children with no constraints or obstacles.

To conclude, I will talk about the effects of globalization and the unemployment of young people. In principle, positive globalization should be characterized by justice and it should provide job opportunities to everyone. However, today it is like a discussion where no one is listening, both at the national and international level. Youth unemployment has reached an unprecedented level and young people are faced with serious problems because the lack of work reduces family income and hinders develop-

ment of the skills that are gained through practical experience and training within companies. Unemployment among young people is much higher than among adults in general.

Finally, the current situation means that we must all work together at the international level and under the auspices of the ILO in order to ensure that fundamental labour principles apply to all and to free the labour market through coherence and dialogue between all production partners.

Ms KNUPPERT (*Worker, Denmark*)

As a Danish trade union representative, I fully agree with the Director-General in emphasizing the importance of assuming collective responsibility in tackling the global jobs crisis with a Decent Work approach.

We know the importance of the ILO standards in the world of work. By these norms, the ILO makes a difference. I call upon governments and employers to remember them and last year's Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

We have noted the report on Burma and I would like to express our sincere thanks to the work of the ILO on this matter. Let us not forget that labour activists still remain in prison in Burma, that forced labour, including the use of child soldiers, is illegal, and that the right to exercise freedom of association still has to be dealt with.

We are pleased that the serious violations of trade union rights in Colombia have been addressed in the Committee on the Application of Standards, just as in many other cases, like Swaziland and Belarus. The important work of this Committee is one of the cornerstones of this Organization.

Promoting gender equality through international labour standards is extremely urgent. Gender equality makes good sense for employers and societies as such, and is an instrument for achieving economic growth.

Fortunately, we have adopted the gender mainstreaming strategy in all our steps of action, but we cannot ignore the fact that any crisis will affect the lives of women differently to the lives of men.

A key element in addressing these challenges is to stop understanding equality as something we can come back to when all other business has been dealt with. Gender equality is part of the solution to the crisis.

I would also like to stress the importance of considering a strong recommendation on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. Combating the HIV pandemic must be a collective effort in every country in the world. It is a common problem and we need common solutions.

Like everybody at this Conference, we have been shocked by the speed and impact of the crisis and the state that it has left labour markets in. In Denmark, unemployment has almost doubled, and may very well triple before the tide turns.

But we also know that the situation in many other countries is much worse. Due to our system of unemployment benefits, most Danish workers can maintain a decent standard of living even when they are unemployed.

And because of our high investment in active labour market policy, most of the unemployed will have a fair chance of getting a new job. At the ILO, we support that workers in other countries get the same opportunities and benefits.

It is in the time of crisis that we must rise to the occasion and show our greatest efforts. The ILO constituents must work to produce an outcome of the discussion on crisis responses that will meet the challenges.

Our response should, as a minimum, prioritize the following: providing guidance on how to ensure recovery of the global economy to reverse the rise in unemployment; suggesting concrete measures on how to improve employment and labour market policies and measures; and showing how the global economy can be reformed to ensure sustainable, equitable and fair development.

Workers all around the world are waiting for us to assume the necessary responsibility and courage to act.

The present crisis is no excuse for pursuing bad policies. We cannot use this situation to cut development aid or back down from promises made in better times.

Neither should we lower ambitions with regard to dealing with climate change. On the contrary, investments in technologies that can create new green jobs will help reignite the economy.

In the same way, we cannot let employers and governments use the crisis as an excuse to ignore core labour standards, to lower working conditions, or to cut wages. That too must be underlined.

Let me conclude by stressing the role of the ILO in promoting and ensuring decent work and a decent life for people all over the world. The ILO must continue its important efforts to obtain better working conditions and social justice for the millions of workers around the world.

Mr KARA (*Worker, Israel*)

I wish to congratulate the Director-General for his Report calling for a Global Jobs Pact and decent work. I hope that this will be a fruitful and productive discussion.

The global financial crisis and the subsequent deterioration of financial economic markets have affected the Israeli scene as well. This crisis threatens the stability of the national economy, the scale of trade, corporate profits and the very existence of firms. As a result, businesses are contracting and the tendency to dismiss workers is growing. A number of sectors have reported an alarming decrease in orders and a severe credit collapse.

It is clear that the crisis is not exclusive to capital and financial markets. It has already spread and has been intensified in employment, the structure of the labour market and the industrial relations system.

In the light of these developments, which threaten businesses and individual jobs, the Histadrut (General Federation of Trade Unions) pushed strongly for a framework agreement during this time of crisis. A round table was organized, consisting of the Government, unions, and employers, which was designed to preserve stability and employment. The agreement, as conceived by the parties, should provide solutions to problems in the labour market, namely reduce labour costs, encourage employment and implement mechanisms for vocational training. Special emphasis will be put on: offering incentives to industrial plants to encourage them to reach flexibility agreements to reduce further lay-offs; examining once again the schedule of amendments to the law of manpower companies with a view to creating an employer who benefits workers rather than one who seeks solely profit; and supporting

legislation on the encouragement of employment and reduction in workers' dismissals.

In its efforts to implement the goals of the round table, the Histadrut has initiated a series of labour legislation proposals leading to a dramatic change in the Israeli labour relations system. Of paramount importance are: the obligation of the employer to conduct collective bargaining with the union representatives for the initial organization of workers; the imposition of fines on employers who threaten freedom of association; the imposition of additional fines when an employer prevents a union representative from gaining access to the workplace in order to interact with the employees; and the introduction of social protection measures. These measures might include: an increase in the budget for vocational training; unemployment allowances, i.e. an extension of the entitlement period; a special fund for assistance to social organizations; changes regarding the protection of subcontractors' workers; and criminal penalty norms for the non-payment of salaries.

The Histadrut is convinced that the round table arrangements and the proposed labour legislation will contribute to attain higher social justice, strengthen decent work standards and increase the scope and intensity of social dialogue in the labour market and industrial relations system in Israel.

As in the past, the Histadrut continues to support the Middle East peace process. With the advice and support of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Histadrut has signed an agreement with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). For many years, the Histadrut and the PGFTU did not succeed in settling financial disputes because of harsh political conditions. Under this ITUC agreement, these disputes have now been resolved. In addition, the Histadrut continues to offer legal guidance to Palestinian workers who require advice and improved working conditions. This has been confirmed by the Director-General's Report.

In this regard, it is important to mention that in October 2007, following the Histadrut's petition to apply Israeli labour laws to Palestinian workers in the settlements, a panel of high court justices accepted the petition and ruled that Palestinians working for Israeli employers in West Bank settlements should be given benefits provided by Israel.

We hope that all workers in the Middle East benefit from the peace process and this Conference.

Mr HETTES (Government, Slovakia)

Decent work is based on the value of the application of economic and social rights, which are exercised in the context of specific policies and government practice, with the participation of employers and employees and their representatives.

At the Eighth Regional Meeting for Europe and Central Asia held in February 2009, it was stated that the policies that were recently applied overrated the role of the market, failed to appreciate the role of the State and underrated decent work. Global unemployment, falling demand, decreasing employment and the subsequent negative impact on families and people all over the world are the consequences.

It is impossible to prevent the current economic and financial crisis from causing unemployment, but if we act immediately we can prevent the liquidation of jobs and help millions of people to find

new and better jobs. All available means must be used to reduce the impact of the recession on workers.

As in other countries, the Government of the Slovak Republic is searching for solutions to reduce the impact of the crisis, especially in connection with the fact that many enterprises are at risk owing to limited access to finances and declining global demand.

The Government has adopted several measures to support entrepreneurs and the investment environment. The strategic objective is to maintain employment or, more precisely, to control and manage the growth of unemployment due to the world crisis. The payment of social contributions by the State for employers and employees in cases of shorter work weeks due to the crisis, the establishment of social enterprises, a number of measures for the support of sole traders, and other measures based on agreements with the social partners, should help to achieve this goal.

In times of crisis it is necessary to focus on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. The Government has adopted measures to support independent gainful activities in the form of advance payments for health insurance, support for access of small and starting entrepreneurs to small loans, the establishment of one-stop shops in order to decrease the administrative burden on establishing enterprises, and changes in the area of taxes which decrease the negative impact of the crisis.

In times of crisis, when many states reduce social protection, it is necessary to ensure that minimum social standards are part of the legal order of the state, particularly in the area of social security, primarily because the crisis most affects the most vulnerable members of society. We must hold fast to the minimum social standards. Many ILO standards provide for the minimum social protection. The Slovak Republic recognizes the values expressed in them. The State should guarantee social security, social welfare and social protection.

It is stated in the Report of the Director-General that social dialogue at all levels is extremely important in the current global crisis. Our Government is aware of the fact that in order to overcome the negative impacts of the financial and economic crisis, the coordinated cooperation of all relevant subjects, including the social partners, is necessary, and that is why it established the Council for Economic Crisis.

In February this year, the Memorandum on Cooperation in Solving the Impacts of the Financial and Economic Crisis on Slovak Society was signed between the Government and the Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovakia. A month later, a Memorandum with the same title was signed between the Government and the employers' representatives. The signatories of both memoranda expressed their willingness to contribute to the fulfilment of the common objective, that is, to help us come through the unfavourable economic period and its negative impacts on the economy, employees, employers and the general population.

In conclusion, allow me to thank the International Labour Office for the technical assistance it has provided in solving the issues of extending the binding effect of higher-level collective agreements.

Original French: Ms TCHOMBI (Minister of Public Services and Labour, Chad)

In the present context of a generalized employment crisis, it is appropriate and just that the International Labour Office should commit itself, together with the tripartite constituents, to help to allay the fears and threats of the global recession affecting everyone.

During this worrying global crisis, the Government of the Republic of Chad intends resolutely to address employment issues. In order to do so, Chad is trying to catch up by increasing and diversifying the creation of universities and higher education institutes across the country.

Starting with this, it plans to take the necessary measures for the implementation of the Declaration on National Employment Policy and to put particular emphasis on the promotion of the private sector as the driving force of job creation, while adopting initiatives to strengthen existing enterprises and attract foreign investment.

Furthermore, the State has earmarked billions of CFA francs from its national resources to grant microcredit to the population, thereby strengthening its poverty-reduction strategy.

In the field of social infrastructure, the Government has launched ambitious projects promoting job creation and socio-economic conditions never before witnessed in our history.

The Government is also continuing its efforts to set up an effective and comprehensive social security system. This will to reform has, among others, led to an increase in social contributions and the drawing up of a draft social security code.

In the present transitional period, we have allocated a national solidarity fund for vulnerable persons and those displaced as a result of war. Substantial resources have also been allocated for providing free emergency care, maternity care, childcare and education, as well as care for people with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Also, this agenda requires close cooperation with the International Labour Office in the context of Decent Work Country Programmes. This is why we are fully committed to the idea of setting up a Global Jobs Pact.

In this regard, we are fully committed to the principle of collective bargaining, which we consider to be the best way of regulating labour relations. Using such methods, we have re-established calm working environments in several enterprises that were threatened with social disputes.

The President of the Republic, the Head of State, His Excellency Lieutenant General Idriss Déby Itno, is resolutely committed to social dialogue, which he has made his credo. The Government supports social dialogue and considers it a vital tool in seeking solutions to the present global crisis.

Thus, a mechanism for dialogue between the State and the private sector was established. The same applies to the institutionalization of a national social dialogue framework.

When it comes to combating forced or compulsory labour, its prohibition is reaffirmed in the Constitution of the Republic and included in the Labour Code.

With this in mind, and in view of the objectives and numerous aspects of the Project to Support the Implementation of the Declaration (PAMODEC), my country thought that it should support this Pro-

ject, which it considers a necessary opportunity to strengthen the capabilities of our administration and our social partners.

Lastly, we would like to reaffirm that, despite the fact that the Government gives priority to maintaining good neighbourly relations and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, my country continues to be the subject of an external aggression, which is dangerously threatening the Republic's institutions, which were democratically chosen by our people.

This danger is even threatening the achievements of our working masses, who wish only for peace and a state of well-being, a central element of the actions of His Excellency, the President of the Republic and Head of State, during his five-year tenure of office, characterized by social policies.

This war, imposed on us by a country that is nevertheless a member of the ILO, flies in the face of the fundamental principles and rights of Chadian workers. Mercenaries are constantly being sent to disturb the tranquillity of our people.

Therefore, we would ask the international community to help Chad in its perpetual search for stability and peace in the interests of social and economic development.

To conclude, I wish to express once again, on behalf of the Government and my accompanying delegation, our gratitude to the International Labour Office and its Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for the particular attention paid to the aspirations of the Government of Chad.

We would therefore reiterate our hope that cooperation be further strengthened to prevent the effects of the global crisis, which remains an employment crisis.

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

The Conference that brings us all together this year is happening in the context of a world recession that is without precedent in world history.

Unfortunately, not only are we talking about damaging effects in the financial sector, but we are also looking at deep effects in the real economy, employment and workers' incomes.

This is why some people are in favour of closing borders, rethinking globalization and returning to protectionism and high levels of state intervention in production processes. We do not agree with that approach.

On the contrary, now, more than ever, we should strengthen systems that prioritize freedoms, private property and its due legal protection, the free market and effective competition, democracy and respect for human dignity, productivity and economic competitiveness.

All of this can and should be compatible with respect for workers' basic rights, both individual and collective, for decent work and for the protection of the environment.

Clearly, we should strengthen economic regulations to prevent the abuse, distortion and artificial barriers that limit investment and competition in the markets. At the same time, we have to be mindful of the people, so that we can find those areas of society that the market does not reach so that the generous, helping and subsidizing hand of the state can bring opportunities and satisfaction to those most in need.

Although the economic crisis and all its harmful effects is our main concern at the moment, we should not forget that, like all crises, it is only going to last for a certain period of time and, in the not-too-distant future, we will have to set out once again on the path of growth and employment.

The challenges that our nations are currently facing as part of the global recession could lead us, in the worst case, to a more informal economy, an increase in the exploitation of children, growing unemployment amongst recent graduates and further casualization of labour. There is a real risk of returning to income and poverty levels that we overcame more than a decade ago.

There is a lot at stake here, which means we have to act quickly and effectively. International cooperation has a fundamental role to play, which is why we are here.

I would like to say something about our recent experience in Mexico. In recent times we have suffered three crises, each with different characteristics and magnitude. First, we had the crisis of public security, then the health problem and then, clearly, the economic crisis.

President Felipe Calderón decided to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in a way that no one had ever done before in the history of our country. The danger of this cancer, which spreads into regions and institutions, challenges the rule of law and threatens public health, security and governability, requires firm, unhesitant action. Public security also means legal security for investment and, consequently, for the generation of employment.

The pandemic of a new version of the human influenza virus, which first appeared in Mexico, led to our Government taking quick, effective, relevant and transparent action at a time when there was great global uncertainty about the scale and danger of this outbreak.

The economic consequences that this pandemic has brought have been serious, in particular in the area of international tourism. That is why President Calderón announced new emergency support measures for businesses and workers that have seen a large part of their incomes dwindle.

Like the rest of the world economies, Mexico is suffering the consequences of an economic crisis not of its making, but today it has improved means to face it.

Thanks to discipline in public finance management, we have a certain amount of slack in our budget to make a historic investment in infrastructure in order to give credit to small and medium-sized enterprises, freeze and reduce energy prices and reduce current Government expenditure.

We have allocated more resources, and more people have benefited from the temporary employment programme and national employment service.

However well all of this helps to mitigate the harmful effects of the crisis, it is not sufficient to overcome it. Nevertheless, without these actions, we are convinced that the effects would be far worse.

Recovery will come sooner or later. Therefore, we will need to concentrate and make concrete the competition agenda, move our structural reforms forward, and promote more investment and more jobs.

Today is World Day against Child Labour. If the market offers employment and development oppor-

tunities to adults, that is to say, to parents, then fewer children are likely to leave school and be forced into work or, in the worst case scenario, be subject to exploitation.

It is better to deal with the causes than the symptoms of child labour. That is related to equality of opportunities and harmonious personal development.

Even worse than the economic crisis is the crisis in confidence and values.

We shall not abandon, at this juncture, the importance of the Decent Work Agenda for the world of work.

Let us make conciliation the basis of understanding between workers and businesses, and let us prioritize, at this time, sources of work, workers' purchasing power and peace in employment.

Legality should be the basis for productivity growth in employment relations in order to generate more wealth and distribute it fairly.

Let employment be our cause and motive; the basis of all our actions, decisions and economic public policies.

Let social dialogue, today and always, be the common factor in tripartism, the point of unity where the talents, capacities and interests of workers, employers and governments are brought together.

Mexico stands ready.

Original Arabic: Mr ZLETNI (Worker, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

I would like to commend the Director-General for his comprehensive Report, particularly in regard to the contribution to dealing with the current global economic and financial crisis.

I am convinced that the tripartite Committee set up to deal with this subject is one of the most important committees – and we certainly needed it at this time – particularly because it includes a large number of economic and financial analysts and experts. Their experience and studies enabled an analysis of the causes and dimensions of this global crisis, and proposals on the means of dealing with its impact.

We also appreciate the discussions that have taken place in that Committee and its intention to establish a Global Jobs Pact. We hope that it will be adopted by the Conference at this historic session so that the ILO can urge the industrialized and rich countries to shoulder their responsibilities for building a new global economy in which justice and comprehensive and sustainable development prevail.

But we feel that this will not be enough, until effective and sustainable measures have been adopted by all governments without exception, in order to build good governance based on decision-making by peoples, in order to put an end to financial and administrative corruption and all forms of exploitation, promote rights and freedoms, and freedom of association in particular, pursue comprehensive and sustainable development that can create jobs for everyone, since work is a fundamental human right, and eliminate poverty and unemployment. International standards must be applied and fundamental principles and rights at work must be respected.

This crisis has certainly made it clear to us as workers how much we need national legislation and regulations to establish social protection, because it is social protection that shelters workers in times of crisis. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ILO

at this juncture to require that governments abide by international Conventions on the subject.

We have addressed the global financial crisis as the most crucial event in the world today. Nevertheless, there are other equally important items on the agenda this session, such as gender equality, the fight against HIV/AIDS in the world of work, the follow-up to the Director-General's Report on a fair globalization, and the follow-up to the annual report on the application of international labour standards.

We would like to thank the Director-General for having sent the annual mission to monitor the situation of workers in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories. We would like to thank that mission for its efforts. We profoundly deplore the tragic situation endured by the Palestinian people as a result of the inhumane practices of the Israeli occupation authorities, and the crimes and massacres perpetrated recently in the Gaza Strip, as well as their attempts to Judaize the city of Al-Quds.

We would like to point out that the report of the mission failed to reflect that tragic situation, which was recognized by many of the other international missions that visited the area recently.

We are surprised to see that the report calls the Palestinian people who are the rightful owners of the land "inhabitants", and the same is done in the case of the people of the occupied Syrian Golan. We are also surprised at the failure to mention openly those who are responsible for this tragedy and these crimes against the Palestinian people.

Once again we confirm our total support for the Palestinians' legitimate right of return and self-determination, and the right to build an independent Palestinian state, with the holy city of Al-Quds as its capital. We also affirm our support for Syria in recovering the occupied Golan, and reject any attempts by the occupying authority to annex the Golan. We also support Lebanon in recovering the rest of its occupied territories, the Shebaa farms and Kafr Shuba.

We categorically reject any intervention in the internal affairs and occupation of the territory of other countries. We therefore strongly condemn attempts to interfere in Sudan's affairs in violation of its national unity and sovereignty. We stress the need to withdraw foreign troops from Iraq and to respect its sovereignty and national unity.

To conclude, we affirm our commitment to respecting all of the human values and principles for which the International Labour Organization is working.

We request you to give Arabic its rightful place in the Organization.

Original Spanish: Mr GONZÁLEZ SADA (Employer, Mexico)

The Employers' Confederation of Mexico, as the representative of Mexican employers, joins the ILO in raising the alarm in the face of the global economic situation. While there are some signs indicating that the economic recession has touched bottom, or is close to doing so, this does not alter the fact that we are facing a difficult situation now and will do in the months to come, at least well into 2010.

Mexico has been very hard hit because our economy is closely linked to that of the United States. Thousands of companies of all sectors and sizes are currently suffering from serious liquidity problems and this has spread throughout the supply chain. Pressure on employment is very strong and, despite

encouraging signs, difficult months lie ahead of us. For this reason, workers, employers and the Government all need to be open to creative and constructive dialogue, and also collaborate in order to take advantage of the options available to mitigate the effects of recession and restore growth.

Furthermore, we have a lot of work to do to bring about the recovery, reconstruction and readjustment that is necessary. Many things will not be the same. There are new problems and new opportunities that did not exist in the past.

Efforts to stimulate the economy need to be done at macro level, as well as in each company and workplace. This, I believe, is a challenge that is shared throughout the world. The worst thing we could do would be to succumb to panic or opt for easy or populist ways out that actually turn into dead-ends. We are living in a different world in many ways, and we need to be open to change and also act with common sense.

We welcome the search for a global strategy, such as that under way in the G20 initiative, but at the same time we need to be wary about opting for hasty and unconsidered responses, and this also applies at the company level.

Strategies must be innovative and be able to bring about a more stable and sustainable world. Nevertheless, that does not mean that we should discard the virtues of the free market, which continues to represent the best instrument available to satisfy the changing needs of people.

The market and globalization are not the problem. In fact, they represent our biggest hopes. Of course we need to have globalization with a human face and a genuinely free market without distortions that would make it unfair and inefficient. We also need to use the instruments of the State in order to guarantee that the market is truly free, but we also need to stimulate the economy in a situation such as the present. Let us not succumb to the temptation of correcting one mistake with another. That would be like fighting fire with fire. It would be an option, but at what cost?

Strategies to overcome the crisis must take into account respect for the sectors involved and their fundamental rights. But at the same time, a commitment to free enterprise, free trade and investment, as well as competitive markets, respect for private property and the state of law and rejection of protectionism are what we need.

With this basis we can act locally yet think globally. We can draw on support mechanisms so that States and companies consolidate as appropriate. On the other hand, we feel that there is no point initiating campaigns and programmes if they cannot be implemented because their rules of access are complex. We fully agree that special treatment is needed for small and medium-sized enterprises, since they are the ones that generate more than 80 per cent of jobs in Mexico and worldwide.

Today in Mexico it is time to move forward decisively, to consolidate the necessary conditions to ensure sustainable prosperity for everyone, and this includes generating more employment. We need quality education for all, infrastructure that benefits those who have the least, respect for people and property, a genuine state of law, democratic governance and one economy, all of this within the structure of the law.

It also follows that we need specific actions such as labour reform that satisfies the requirements of

today's world and is forward-looking. We also need a labour framework which generates opportunities for both employees and employers instead of inhibiting them. There is still a lot of work to do. We should not be mesmerized by the problems, but rather tackle them with determination and common sense.

Original Spanish: Mr VALDEZ CUÑAS (Worker, Ecuador)

This session of the International Labour Conference is being held at a very difficult time for all countries because of the world crisis, which is having a profound impact on workers and our peoples. It is a clear reflection of the total failure of the neo-liberal system.

This assembly will be examining matters such as HIV/AIDS, employment and social protection, gender equality, as well as holding a Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis. More than ever before in its history, it will assume the responsibility of defending its standard-setting system to ensure the respect of workers' fundamental rights – especially Conventions Nos 87 and 98 concerning freedom of association and collective bargaining, which are key to decent work.

In the Latin American countries, there is a strong tendency for change in the system, and the workers welcome this change. But looking more specifically at the situation in our country, we are in a very compromising, but independent, position. We therefore welcome positive decisions but are determined to counter any measures that might be counter to the beneficial aspects of this change. Of great concern to us is the fact that the national government in Ecuador is adopting decrees and regulations, often provisional, which flagrantly contravene the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining enshrined in Conventions Nos 87 and 98 and incorporated into our Constitution. It is acting on the pretext that it wants to put an end to certain abuses and privileges in the public sector. Committees have been established by the Ministry of Labour, which, in a unilateral and arbitrary fashion, are taking steps to revise established contractual agreements. Rights acquired by workers over the years are being erased. All this is undermining the very nature of collective agreements, based upon the principles of freedom of association, which are freely concluded between workers and employers. These may not be revoked by any legal authority, without the consent of both the parties involved.

It is for this reason that the workers of Ecuador, represented by the CEDOCUT, CEOSL and CTE, affiliates of the Single Workers' Front (FUT), have jointly submitted a complaint to the Committee on Freedom of Association. We have requested that this complaint be handled very urgently because we cannot accept that workers' rights are trampled on by any Government.

We must make it clear that we are not trying to defend abuses or privileges. We merely want to make sure that the rules which have been established are respected. There is an overriding need for the ILO to send a mission to our country to ascertain the facts and use its good offices to put an end to the malpractices occurring in the labour sector.

We need to have true social dialogue in our country which is based upon the strict respect for our legitimate working rights, be they individual or collective in nature. We must be guaranteed decent wages to ensure that we can feed our families, la-

bour stability, social protection, job security and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

We have made it our daily commitment to try and put an end to the oligarchy and small groups in power who uphold capitalism in our country, which has condemned so many people to poverty over the years. We want to see witness the birth of a new system – one that will usher in social justice, fairness, equality and the full enjoyment of human rights and rights at the workplace.

Finally, we would like to call upon the ILO to reaffirm its commitment to defend the fundamental rights of workers and we also call upon our brother workers to continue furthering the cause of unity. We must not lose sight of the fact that, at the end of the day, we are the only true victims of this worldwide crisis. We must remain firm, rejecting any solution that would make it even harder for us to bear the consequences of the failure of the decadent neoliberal capitalist system.

Mr PASKA (*Worker, Papua New Guinea*)

It may be said that this year's International Labour Conference agenda was determined 30 years ago or so, when free market ideologies on both sides of the Atlantic conspired to rid the global economic system of regulation and so-called impediments to market imperatives. Their mission statement included the roll out of a raft of policy prescriptions aimed at achieving their objectives – a one-size-fits-all approach was adopted which saw these policies literally forced on nations through their governments, an indoctrinated bureaucracy and a very willing private sector. My country was one of the many.

The oft-repeated mantra debased state intervention and trumpeted the magic of the free market as the panacea for the world's economic woes and social inequalities. Meanwhile, the much vaunted positive trickle-down effect to the vast majority of the world's population failed to materialize as corporate avarice, some may say greed, took over. Today, the convening of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference is set against a backdrop fraught with uncertainty, triggered by the financial meltdown and the subprime imbroglio. Needless to say, the present economic woes bring home the frailty of the market. When left to itself, it has neither the ability to correct itself, nor to distribute economic gains equitably. This much is known, and indeed has been a central pillar for the case against unbridled markets in the world. What begs inquiry, today, is how best we can respond to the negative fallout of the effects of the calamity before us and, more importantly, what measures should be introduced to rejuvenate the global economy and insure it against vested manipulations, while ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of economic gains.

In many ways, we have been here before. Nearly all the measures currently being discussed to mitigate the effects of the crisis have been canvassed many times previously and, indeed, are standing instruments of the ILO. They have, however, gained greater prominence this time around because of the urgency and magnitude of the crisis. Of course, many developing countries would express justifiable cynicism for what may be viewed as an attempt to garner international support for a crisis that has had sweeping negative consequences for the developed

world, particularly on the employment front. For them the crisis of unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment has had a degree of permanency about it in their countries for decades, such that this crisis could be considered business as usual. Such cynicism is understandable considering the international rhetoric, over the past decades, to eradicate poverty and lift the quality of life for the vast majority of people in developing nations, which has not been matched with equal enthusiasm on the financial front.

That said, it is important to keep in mind that however justifiable this cynicism may be, it has to be recognized that the vitality of the developed economies is important to the health of the global economy, in so far as global economic interaction is concerned.

Furthermore, a stable and healthy global economy is important to development everywhere. Thus, we would subscribe to the prevailing proposition that aggregate demand needs to be boosted and steps should be taken to avoid wage deflation, as a fall in global demand may trigger a downward spiral of falling employment, falling prices and falling wages – clearly not a preferable position to be in. As a measure to counter wage deflation, there is a need to ensure that the minimum wage becomes a necessary adjunct. This entails the requirement to build a wage floor, below which wages cannot fall further, as well as to resist the temptation to remove minimum wages, which will be completely counterproductive to improving aggregate demand.

In the context of the present discussion on minimum wages and collective bargaining, such overwhelming international consensus cannot be ignored. In addition, there is a need to ameliorate the role of the state and the market, as well as to make provision for the adequate financing of state infrastructure and bring about a shift in development and industrial policies to strengthen domesticled growth, based on diversification of the economy and increased local purchasing power.

A critical aspect of this exercise demands that financial governance must shift to a regulatory environment that mitigates finance being divorced from the real economy. In this regard, we would concur with the view that measures developed by the United Nations Financial Summit should be taken on board.

In times of crisis, the most vulnerable are almost always the first to be affected, the worst hit, and the last to recover, if at all. There will be a need to ensure that programmes meant to address the needs of the most vulnerable are not sacrificed or withdrawn. With regard to workers, the relevance of numerous ILO core Conventions, in particular on freedom of association and collective bargaining, will become particularly critical as many employers, in seeking to bail themselves out of the crisis, may resort to undermining workers' rights, which will, we suggest, merely exacerbate existing problems and complicate attempts to find common understanding and partnership.

Business plays a key role in the supply chain. Improving demand without addressing the supply side of the equation will be problematic, both for entrepreneurial and consumer demand. Therefore, necessary interventions will need to be framed to ensure that the main actors in the supply chain remain vibrant. The agriculture sector is labour-intensive. For most developing nations, this is the nerve centre of

their economy, as well as the sector which provides jobs for many. Special government incentives and programmes should be developed to ensure that this sector is not forced to make drastic cuts to its budgets which will in turn undercut export margins, leading to shortfalls in revenue and forced employment lay-offs.

The need for balancing social and economic imperatives is critical to the achievement of tangible outcomes with regard to improving the quality of lives for the millions who have missed out on the gains made over the last three decades. During this period, heavy emphasis was placed on growth. It was argued that social policy should not be a primary policy objective for developing nations as the benefits of growth will eventually trickle down. Such views will still dominate development debates and have served to delay social development and the deployment of equitable policies. The evidence shows strong support for the pursuit of both growth and social development policies simultaneously. In other words, growth alone is not enough. Thus, there should be a degree of urgency to promote robust social and economic policies, in parallel, in a complimentary and mutually reinforcing manner.

In a crisis environment it is easy to lose sight of the need to develop national strategies to implement policy initiatives aimed at minimizing the effects of

the crisis. For this reason, it is imperative that nations secure the political commitment of their leadership to ensure that the relevant mechanisms are in place and key stakeholders participate fully in any recovery programme.

National development strategies provide an opportunity to rethink a country's social contract. Bureaucratic or technocratic sectorial approaches alone are not enough. To be efficient, national strategies have to be articulated in an integrated manner and supported by a coalition of partners involving the state, business, unions and civil society.

A shared approach is the critical factor to sustained development and the success of recovery plans. Ultimately, it is the commitment and willingness of the different social groups to pursue common interests that will allow recovery and sustained development to succeed. It is here that the value of tripartism becomes ever more pronounced and indispensable.

In conclusion, while it is critical that people must be put back in jobs and that the financial markets are stabilized, it is equally important to keep mind that whatever programmes are instituted include a long-term development chapter that looks beyond the crisis.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.55 p.m.)

Tenth sitting

Friday, 12 June 2009, 2.30 p.m.

Presidents: Mr Hossain, Mr Palma Caicedo, Mr Zellhoefer

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

The PRESIDENT (Mr HOSSAIN)

I have the honour to declare open the tenth sitting of the 98th Session of the Conference.

In the first part of this sitting we will continue our discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General.

At 3 p.m. we will suspend that discussion for a ceremony to commemorate the World Day against Child Labour and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in the presence of distinguished guests. The ceremony will include a musical performance.

Mr CHOUDHURY (*Employer, India*)

The global economic slowdown may shrink the world economy by 2.6 per cent in 2009 and that would lead to an estimated 75–105 million more people joining the ranks of the poor. Most of this setback will be felt in East and South Asia, with between 56 and 80 million people likely to be affected directly or indirectly.

This crisis is expected to have a snowball effect during the next 6–8 years, while 43 million new entrants are expected to enter the job market each year. This is in addition to the 200 million unemployed persons.

People in the most vulnerable groups, such as women, the physically challenged, migrants, unskilled workers and especially those in the unorganized sector, will be most affected.

To find a way to address these challenges will require the combined wisdom of all of us gathered together at this Conference, with special guidance from the ILO.

In India, our tried and tested systems and procedures incorporating good corporate governance, a large domestic market and systemic checks and balances have cushioned the impact to a great extent. But we have still lost about half a million jobs in the last three months.

The positive initiative taken by the Government of India on the economic front has shown definite signs of recovery. In 2009 India has achieved a growth rate of 6.7 per cent and we are very optimistic that we will regain our original growth rate very soon.

The Director-General's Report recognizes that a threefold approach is most appropriate in this context.

While the response of G20 countries is welcome, we advocate a concerted effort by the ILO through generous support by multilateral institutions and the developed countries, which is necessary to stimulate the activities amongst all social partners and thus ensure an early revival.

The Decent Work Country Programme and promotion of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization can also serve as a strong institutional mechanism to address this crisis. We think that globalization should not be squarely blamed for the present global economic crisis. Globalization has also produced positive results as well, particularly in developing countries.

India has demonstrated that, in a fair and strong global economy, our growth rate has averaged 9 per cent during the last three years. What is needed is perhaps to make globalization policies more inclusive. Technology has played a significant role in promoting globalization. Therefore education and skill building need to be focused to benefit from globalization.

The Government of India has already taken initiatives to increase employability and for this purpose a national skill development corporation has come into existence under the leadership of our honourable Prime Minister.

The Government of India has also established a national rural employment guarantee scheme, which provides for a minimum of 100 days of employment per family for the 27 million families living below the poverty line.

We also compliment the ILO for putting gender concerns at the forefront of discussions at this Conference. The poor socio-economic conditions of women, particularly in developing and underdeveloped countries, result in severe gender disparities. This reflects on the education, working conditions and other socio-economic indicators of women and nucleus families.

I am proud to say that India is fully aware of the cause and has ratified both the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), removing disparity in the employment of women. It is also our constitutional mandate to remove discrimination of any kind.

The surge of HIV/AIDS is striking very fast and, according to ILO estimates, 7,400 new HIV infec-

tions are reported every day. Already 33 million people are living with the virus.

India has approximately 2.3 million infected people. Apart from the misery it brings to the families, it also causes loss of human resources.

It is my privilege to inform this august gathering that Indian employers have signed a joint statement of commitment to address the issue of HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

Forced labour is a violation of human rights and a social menace, spurred by poverty, debt and bondage, and vulnerable economic conditions often lead to a willing acceptance. It is unfortunate that 9 million people in Asia alone are still in the clutches of forced labour.

India has national legislation, such as the Forced Labour Abolition Act, and the offence is severely punishable. We have also ratified both the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).

We fully support the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998, in an effort to put an end to this pernicious practice. The ILO could look at other options, such as advocacy, dialogue and technical and financial support, and encourage developed nations to promote labour-intensive industry.

With these words, I thank you all for listening patiently and for giving me the opportunity to address this august gathering.

Original Portuguese: Mr LUPI (Minister of Labour and Employment, Brazil)

I would like to begin by congratulating our colleague, Mr Somavia, on his election and, more recently, his re-election to that post.

I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to address this Conference at a time of great historical importance and to touch on certain aspects. I am referring to the current economic and financial crisis, the worst since the Great Depression of 1929, which is the central theme of the Conference. We need to find a way out for all of us.

Brazil has reacted speedily to the crisis by taking a number of rapid measures intended to stimulate credit, but not simply that. Since 2003, we have managed to raise the Brazilian minimum wage by over 60 per cent, thereby guaranteeing purchasing power in a way never before witnessed by the working classes of Brazilian society. We have, in this way, managed to stimulate our domestic market, which is necessary indeed.

Apart from this, we have also taken on board what has been felt by the Brazilian population, namely that companies benefiting from public funding, with subsidized loans, should not be able to dismiss workers. At this time of crisis, we cannot allow certain entrepreneurs who consider themselves clever to think that they can make use of public loans in order to maintain their profit margins to the detriment of the workers.

Under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, there are two major funds which are under tripartite management. One of these is the Unemployment Guarantee Fund (FGTS), which is made up of monthly payments made by employers on behalf of their employees, at a rate of 8 per cent of remuneration; this is one of the major investment funds of the federal Government. Using these funds, that is around R\$100 billion, we have implemented subsidized social housing programmes. A large part of the fun-

ding for the "My House, My Life" project, recently launched by President Lula for the construction of more than one million houses, came from this Fund. Since September, the Fund has increased its investment in this form of housing by 100 per cent, that is a total of R\$25 billion.

The Workers' Protection Fund (FAT), which is also under tripartite management and has a capital of R\$70 billion has also directed a large part of its investment to employment and income generation. I would also like to mention that two lines of credit were recently launched by the SAT: credit of R\$50 million for workers using motorbikes of up to 150 cc to go to work, with very low levels of interest; and credit of R\$100 million for tour operators in Brazil.

An earnings allowance, which consists of the minimum wage of around R\$230, will be paid to around 16 million workers in 2009. All those who have worked at least 30 days previously can receive this benefit.

Furthermore, we have also increased unemployment insurance. This mechanism enables workers who have been laid off to receive benefits straight away, as soon as they lose jobs.

From 2006 until the end of 2008, Brazil witnessed a considerable expansion in employment levels, with unemployment in Brazil falling from 10 to 7.9 per cent. Workers' average monthly income of has increased by 6.7 per cent, from R\$1,180 to 1,260.

Our campaign to tackle forced labour and all forms of child labour has been stepped up. We would like to emphasize the employers' commitment to tackling child labour, which has also significantly helped to reduce the number of working children and adolescents.

As a result of intense discussions within the National Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in June 2008, the President of the Republic signed a decree instituting a list of the worst forms of child labour, which corresponds to Articles 3 and 4 of ILO Convention No. 182.

From 2007, trade unions have managed to gain recognition by national legislation, and in more than 90 per cent of the collective bargaining procedures conducted between 2006 and 2008 workers negotiated wage adjustments equal to or above inflation.

As a result of all these measures, Brazil is now one of the few G20 countries to have a positive balance in terms of formal employment. This year we have created more than 48,000 new jobs, and we hope that, by the end of the year, this figure will rise to one million new jobs in the formal sector, with Brazilian GDP growing by 2 per cent. This is the situation in my country.

I would also like to note that we consider it timely and appropriate to hold a discussion at this session of the Conference on Recommendations concerning issues such as HIV/AIDS and gender equality in the world of work, as cross-cutting elements of decent work. We have invested heavily in educational campaigns in this area.

I am also pleased to note that President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will be honouring us with his presence the Summit of Heads of State next week. Furthermore, an inter-ministerial executive committee has also been established which is responsible for the implementation of the National Plan for Decent Work.

A part of this initiative, the President will sign a joint declaration with the ILO for cooperation in

implementing the National Plan for Decent Work. At the same time, my Ministry has also entered into commitments with cocoa and coffee workers.

We are one of the first countries of the G20 to emerge from the financial crisis about which we have heard so much.

Original Spanish: Mr VILLASANTE ARANÍBAR (Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion, Peru)

The challenge of grappling with the world employment crisis and its recovery through the decent work policies contained in the Report of the Director-General is undoubtedly part of the essential global agenda.

The employment crisis is usually viewed from the interaction between economic and social institutions and the relationship between the economy and labour rights, and between the market and the role of the State as the guarantor of fundamental rights and principles. These, the themes that are being debated around the world, usually skirt the issue that, from the foundations of society, international morals are being hatched that will have important effects in political institutions. With regard to the employment situation, looked at from economic and social institutions, we can see that we need to incorporate the dialectics of political institutions that respond to the global challenges of today, such as the current employment crisis.

Today, the nation State is languishing because of globalization. To this is added information technology and communications.

We need States that regulate the markets and recognize the importance of the market in providing goods and services and for economic development, but also consolidated States that are capable of guaranteeing fundamental rights to every individual in its territory, regardless of nationality for the processes of migration. Economic institutions need to work within the framework of respect for those rights in order to achieve equality and freedom that are substantive and transformative, and not simply formal.

These new requirements and priorities that are called for by citizens and contained in the Director-General's Report, and I refer to the right to work, employment rights and the right to social protection, which need a new political institutionality. The imbalances of the global market go beyond the nation States. Problems such as the current crisis, migration, human trafficking and the environment, amongst others, transcend State borders and influence other territories.

We therefore, need to consider strengthening the actions of States with a focus on rights and international cooperation. But I have the impression that the international situation means that we have to look at a new political and democratic approach so that cooperation can be built on a global, national and regional basis.

I consider that human rights are insurmountable in economic institutions. Social institutions guarantee political stability and sustainable and balanced development in economic institutions, and institutional relations are only really possible as part of political structures that are suited to the dimension or area in which they are produced.

This crisis invites reflection on the importance of labour policies in the economy, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups who not only want the incorporation of inclusive public policies, but also posi-

tive discrimination. This is why social protection is so important.

I would like to say that, for Peru, the Global Jobs Pact proposed by the Director-General will be a valuable instrument for strengthening our employment policies. Faced with this crisis, the State decided to step up public spending in labour-intensive sectors, such as the construction sector. We have implemented a programme of employment retraining, earmarking 100 million nuevo sol (PEN) for workers affected by the international crisis, rehabilitating them in growth sectors or those that have been less affected, and also for companies forced to adapt their production. We must also deal with other concerns, such as safety and health at work because, as part of the crisis, processes affecting workers may be neglected. In my country we are making progress on a system of universal health insurance and social protection for workers in small and medium-sized enterprises. There are millions of such workers in Peru and 50 per cent of the financing for this scheme comes from public treasury resources.

I do hope that our countries find ways to reduce or mitigate the effects of the international crisis and that the workers will not be the first and only people affected by it.

Mr STOEV (Employer, Bulgaria)

On behalf of the Association of the Organizations of Bulgaria Employers (AOBE) and the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I would like to express my satisfaction that the Conference is focusing its activity on the dimensions and challenges of the global economic crisis.

The major threats facing the labour market are the current economic crisis and the need to increase the activity of the labour force and raise labour productivity. Improving the quality of the labour force to make it sustainable in a knowledge-based economy is another challenge that is being addressed jointly by the Government and social partners.

Another important challenge is to improve coordination and balance between flexibility and security in order to develop a more open, demand-oriented, inclusive and non-segmented labour market. Special attention is given in Bulgaria to unemployment among the most vulnerable groups and minorities. Partnership among government institutions and the social partners is a key principle in developing and implementing Bulgaria's employment strategy.

In recent years our country has succeeded in bringing about useful changes in the economic environment and the conditions for doing business in Bulgaria. This has been a result of the coordinated and well-founded proposals and actions of the employers' organizations. Special attention is merited by the reduction in personal and corporate taxes to 10 per cent following our EU accession. As a result of this and the country's high growth rate, there have been good prospects in the development of the private sector. This allowed also a growth in salaries exceeding labour productivity and inflation. The low unemployment percentage for some regions, for example only 1.44 per cent for the Sofia district, helps to explain why Bulgaria is facing the crisis from such a position and felt its impact with a delay of a few months. The stricter regulation of the banking sector, which suffered a more severe crisis during the period 1996–97, had a positive influence

to the same effect. It is also important to mention that the organizations of employers, with their concerted actions and united position, prevailed on the competent government authorities to introduce suitable measures to mitigate the consequences of the crisis, including an increase in the Bank for Development reserve facilitating the access of SMEs, acceleration in the procedures for using European funds in the area of competitiveness, infrastructure and human resources development. We set up a special fund for partial payment of the remuneration of part-time workers in threatened businesses, and increased the funds supporting the export-oriented companies by the Expert Insurance Agency.

Taking advantage of the fact that Bulgaria is in the midst of preparations for national and European parliamentary elections, we made proposals for appropriate measures to improve the economic and social environment that were adopted by some of the political forces represented in Parliament and endorsed by the signing of a public agreement, while others included them in their pre-election programmes.

The members of the AOB as a whole participated in the elaboration and support of the National Employment Strategy, the National Employment Action Plan and the relevant strategies drafted at the European and national level. The positive collaboration and participation in the activity of the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Bulgaria is also worth mentioning. With the participation of the organizations of employers, important studies and analyses have been made on the basis of which appropriate measures were proposed to the competent government bodies.

As a representative of the Bulgarian employers, we are also bound to point out that the representative trade unions in Bulgaria participate only partially in the tripartite dialogue stipulated in Bulgarian labour legislation, in the committees of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, but we think that their presence will contribute to even more sustainable decisions by the National Council. We will continue to make every endeavour to re-establish dialogue in this important body for the development of industrial relations in Bulgaria.

The PRESIDENT

We shall now interrupt the general discussion as it is time for us to move on to the celebration of the World Day against Child Labour.

(The Conference was suspended at 3.00 p.m. and resumed at 3.15 p.m.)

**CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD
LABOUR AND THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF
CONVENTION No. 182**

(Mr Palma Caicedo takes the Chair.)

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

This sitting is being held to mark the World Day against Child Labour and to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). We are lucky to have with us today, joining Director-General Somavia on our panel, United States Senator Tom Harkin, and Mr Bokkie Botha and Sir Roy Trotman, who were respectively the Employer and Worker spokespersons on the Committee on Child Labour ten years ago.

Before listening to our distinguished panel of speakers I would like to welcome a group of young musicians from Kenya, the Haba na Haba band – in English the name means “Step by Step”. Many of these young people have been directly involved in, or affected by, child labour. With the help of the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and the international donor community, they have been removed from child labour and provided with the opportunity to develop their musical skills at the Mathare Youth Centre. I would like to invite them to open our session with a song.

(Musical interlude)

The SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

It is a pleasure to welcome Senator Tom Harkin, a friend and ally of the ILO, a tireless campaigner against child labour, a tireless promoter of social justice and freedom. I can personally testify to his wholehearted involvement and support for the Chilean democracy movement in our struggle against the dictatorship, many years ago.

When the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), was adopted, we were honoured by the presence of President Clinton. That was very visible. But Senator Harkin was also there, and this was his commitment to this cause, a commitment which began long before we adopted Convention No. 182.

Thanks to that double presence, President Clinton ratified the Convention in Seattle five months later and opened the way for the most rapidly ratified Convention in the history of the ILO. Mr Harkin, thank you for making this journey to be with us again.

Other key figures from a decade ago are also here: Sir Roy Trotman, who is now spokesperson of the Workers' group, and Mr Bokkie Botha, were respectively the Worker and Employer spokespersons in the 1999 Committee on Child Labour. We welcome them both.

Mr Hossain, President of this Conference, you know well that your country was an early partner in our work against child labour. And Kailash Satyarthi, organizer of the powerful Global March against Child Labour and the most important global activist in civil society. What a powerful moment it was when he and a group of former child labourers marched into this hall in support of the new Convention. We are delighted that some of those key figures could return today. Their active engagement continues to be indispensable. Those who marched here ten years ago are still with us, so let us applaud them.

To the musicians, former child labourers, let me say thank you. Their spirit and joy nourish our resolve to end child labour. They had on their T-shirts something that sounds so strong today, “Give girls a chance: End child labour”, and this is why we are again here.

I also want to mention Mr Charles Beer.

(The speaker continues in French.)

We welcome him. Each year, the children of schools in Geneva meet together with children who have had to work and we have managed to do that very successfully today.

(The speaker resumes in English.)

A lot has changed in ten years. A worldwide mobilization against child labour, an evident growth of awareness of the need to act. And something that for us is very important, the near universal ratification of Convention No. 182. You know that we are just 14 ratifications short of universal ratification. Can you imagine, just 14 countries! I would really call on those 14 countries to make the historical gesture of telling the world that there is total political unanimity around the world, that we want to end child labour. I will not identify them, but I do ask them to give the world this incredible and very strong, strong message: "the whole world has ratified Convention No. 182".

As Kailash said in a meeting we had outside in the plaza, we are happy because of the children that have managed to escape bondage, but our task is to help the others make it, so we must persist.

But, in knowing that we have a task ahead of us, we also have to realize that the positive things that have happened did not happen by chance. It took the mobilization that I am celebrating today in the children. It took Senator Harkin, who understood the role of the ILO. For all who know him it comes as no surprise that he almost single-handedly secured the United States funding that enabled the ILO to scale up its activities, which represents around 60–65 per cent of overall activities in IPEC.

I know that he would also appreciate that I acknowledge others who have accompanied us. Let me mention Germany, which supported the pioneering work. There have been over 50 other contributors over the years, including developing countries, workers' and employers' organizations which backed our work. You cannot imagine the number of very small contributions that we get: symbolic contributions, people who want to say "Look we want to be part of this process, so here is what I can do." It reminds all of us to ask ourselves what we can do in our official positions, in the organizations we represent. There were also landmark forums in Norway and the Netherlands in 1997, and I know that the Netherlands' intention is to host another one next year.

The ultimate recognition goes to countries that have been painstakingly constructing national policy systems and programmes to end child labour. Progress is fragile, particularly now as we weather the present crisis. But I can see how awareness and the will to act have grown, and in life's reality people need responses: the responses the ILO has given through the Decent Work Agenda.

Let me finish by saying that this is the moment to act, reminding ourselves of what experience tells us, that girls are more vulnerable to child labour, and we must make a special call to give girls a chance.

Let me undertake to Senator Harkin and to the world that the ILO will continue to deepen and expand its engagement against child labour until every child can go to school and every parent has a decent job. It is a formidable challenge. We all know that. But it is also a test of the moral fibre of our societies and the moral quality of our leadership. It is possible, and we will prevail. So today, more than ever, to take this fight forward, we need the vision, the energy and the commitment of a man like Tom Harkin who carries it in his soul, and transforms it into tireless political action. What I want to say is that the man carries the value of the person, but the man transmits the values to the politician, and the politician is the person that has asked for us to do so

many things. He is a major champion of good causes.

Thank you all so much for being here all of you today. Let us resolve that we will make those 14 ratifications and that we will be able to tell that good news to the world relatively soon.

The PRESIDENT (Mr HOSSAIN)

Thank you, Director-General. I am now honoured to give the floor to the United States Senator, Tom Harkin.

Mr HARKIN (*Senator, United States*)

The ILO is the oldest agency of the United Nations, a leading advocate for social justice around the world, and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. I am honoured to be with you to share not only the ILO's 90th anniversary, but also the 75th anniversary of the United States joining the ILO, and the 10th anniversary of the adoption of ILO Convention No. 182.

At the outset, I want to thank Director-General Somavia for his inspirational leadership over the last ten years. I thank him, in particular, for his passionate commitment to the cause of eliminating the worst forms of child labour around the world.

I also want to thank all of you – representatives of labour ministries and proud and committed members of trade unions and employer organizations – for your leadership back home and collectively here in this world parliament of labour.

Thanks to your tripartite leadership, ten years ago this month this body adopted ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. Thanks to your commitment, it was the most rapidly ratified ILO Convention in history.

In adopting Convention No. 182, the ILO declared that abusive and exploitative child labour is one of those uniquely offensive practices – like slavery – that is never acceptable and never excusable. And you set forth the great goal of eliminating this scourge from the face of the Earth.

You were clear about what is meant by abusive and exploitative labour. It is not kids helping out the family, growing vegetables or fruits or working on a small farm with their family. It is not wholesome, after-school work, which, I dare say, a lot of us did when we were younger. ILO Convention No. 182 addresses the horror of children who are chained to looms or who toil in factories where furnace temperatures exceed 800 degrees Celsius; children who work unprotected under slave-like conditions; children forced to sell illegal drugs, forced into prostitution, forced into armed conflict.

These children endure long hours of hard labour, with little or no pay. They are denied an education and deprived of normal growth and development. They are children stripped of their childhood.

I was first introduced to this issue almost 20 years ago, by a man by the name of Kailash Satyarthi. He opened my eyes to the tragedy of child slaves in the carpet industry – children who were beaten and starved and forced to live without love or hope. Mr Satyarthi's extraordinary activism inspired my own work – through legislation in the United States Congress and through public and private initiatives – to fight the worst forms of child labour. So again, I thank you, Kailash, for all that you have done and for setting my feet on this path to do whatever I could.

My own investigations of abusive and exploitative child labour have taken me to ILO projects spanning the globe from West Africa to Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal and many others.

This problem is too big for a committed advocate on the ground; much less for a United States Senator. And that is why the adoption of ILO Convention No. 182 was such a landmark event. I was proud to be here in Geneva, along with President Bill Clinton, on 17 June 1999, for that event. And I was proud to introduce to the United States Senate, just this week, a resolution commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Convention, and I want you to know that it passed the United States Senate on Tuesday with a unanimous vote.

ILO Convention No. 182 put the full power and prestige of the ILO and the United Nations into the fight against abusive and exploitative child labour.

Between the years 2000 and 2004, the number of child labourers worldwide fell by 11 per cent. By any measure, that is great progress.

However, I did not come here today to bestow victory laurels. I have come here today with a warning: powerful global forces threaten to take us backwards and to drag a new generation of children into abusive and exploitative labour.

For the first time since the 1930s, we are experiencing a global recession – a downturn that has been especially hard on people in developing countries. Unemployment is surging and prices for basic food staples are skyrocketing. These dire circumstances provide a fertile breeding ground for the worst forms of child labour. Desperate people resort to desperate and degrading measures just to survive, including forcing children into abusive labour.

So, I have come to Geneva to urge this body to redouble its commitment to eradicating the exploitation of children.

I applaud the Director-General for his Report to this Conference: *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*. I also applaud the ILO's special focus this year. As the Director-General just said, there are now over 100 million girls who are exploited in child labour.

But words and warnings are not enough, we need deeds and action.

If we are against child labour, then we must be for decent jobs for parents. We must be for greater access to school for every child. We must be for basic social supports so that vulnerable families are not obliged to relinquish their children to exploitation.

So, as you continue to lead on this fundamental issue, I want to quickly outline a five-point plan I would like to submit to you for global action.

First, we must provide access to quality education. School fees and related costs effectively close the schoolhouse door to millions of poor kids. And, in many places, especially in rural areas, there simply are not any schools. Wealthy nations must spend less on their militaries and more on education in developing countries. We need fewer bombs and more books. We need fewer troops and more teachers.

Second, forging partnerships. I urge the ILO to work with and take some leadership from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to ensure that loans are linked to pledges by governments to increase access to schools and to maintain social safety nets for the poor. I also urge the ILO to continue reaching out to sister organizations within the United Nations to develop joint

strategies for improving education and fighting poverty. But I say again, no more IMF loans, no more IMF restructuring, no more World Bank loans unless they are done in accordance with the country pledging that they are going to make education more available to every poor kid in their country.

Third, sharing best practices. I encourage member States to embrace proven programmes, such as Brazil's Bolsa familia initiative. Under Bolsa familia, poor families in Brazil are given a stipend by the Government of US\$35 a month in return for a commitment to keeping their children in school and taking them for regular health checkups. Brazil has created a brilliant model and I congratulate the representatives here from Brazil. But we ought to emulate it. We should follow their lead on this.

Fourth, increasing resources for the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). IPEC has been enormously successful in providing technical assistance to end child labour and getting kids into schools. In the United States Senate, I secured the initial funding for this Programme in 1995, and I have succeeded in greatly increasing my Government's contribution to IPEC in the years since. Since 1995, the United States has provided more than US\$377 million, contributing to 155 projects in 73 countries. As a direct result, more than 800,000 children have been rescued from the worst forms of child labour.

IPEC is an outstanding programme. In response to the worldwide recession, it is time for other governments to dramatically increase their funding for IPEC.

And I want to take a pause here to introduce the person who really does all the work on this. Now, I do not know how this is going to come across in translation, but one of my favourite stories is one that is true. It was told by Will Rogers. Will Rogers was a satirist in the early part of the twentieth century in the United States who was always poking fun at politicians. After the First World War, there was a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. It was a hot July day and the troops all had their uniforms on and they were fainting as they marched. Sitting in the stands were all the politicians and the generals and the admirals. Will Rogers looked at this and he said, "It seems to me that if we wanted to honour the troops, we would let the troops sit in the stands and make the politicians and the generals march by." That is my way of now introducing the troop who has really done so much to make sure that we have got the money for IPEC, who keeps up to date on all this. I have a lot of duties and responsibilities but I put a high priority on this. I could not do it without Rosemary Gutierrez, who is the person who gets the job done.

Fifth, we must amplify the voice of tripartism. I applaud all of the efforts of employers' and workers' organizations to fight child labour. But I challenge you to do more. We must have more robust and proactive engagement by businesses and trade unions.

Quite simply, businesses can offer a demand-side solution to this problem. If businesses ensure that all their supply chains are child-labour free, this will make a huge difference and, as I have said to so many businesses, it can be used as a positive marketing tool for the business entity. Just like Walmart, they can actually use that as a way of increasing market share by saying, "See, none of our products are made by child labour."

So I urge businesses to be more proactive. And I challenge my friends in the trade union movement to speak and act even more forcefully in opposing the worst forms of child labour. Trade unions have always been outspoken advocates for human and civil rights. Well, there is no more pressing human and civil rights issue right now than ending the exploitation and virtual enslavement of children in the workplace.

So, ladies and gentlemen, across the globe this is a time of testing. And what is being tested, under the stress of economic crisis, is our commitment to our values and our mutual solidarity, our determination to work together in this great cause of ending the worst forms of child labour.

I believe that we can and will pass this test. You have already shifted the boundaries of the debate. In the span of a decade you have moved the world from denial to awareness to action. Now let us move from action to abolition: the end of abusive child labour once and for all.

I would like to close by sharing a letter from a young child labourer whose life was transformed by an IPEC project in Santiago, Dominican Republic.

"They call me *El Abuelo* because I am the oldest of six siblings", he wrote. "Since I was five, I have been to the dump every day to work for money or to find food. One day I was coming back and heard some children laughing and singing. I got closer to discover many of my garbage-picking friends inside. They told me that they were in a programme called *Espacios para Crecer* (Spaces to Grow). They were learning reading and writing. The next day, without telling my grandma, I left the dump early and I went to the school. I have been there every day since. I have learned to value myself and others, and love my family and community.

I learned to read. Neither my father nor mother knew how to read, so that made me a big hero. I earned stars in maths and started writing, and now I cannot stop.

If I want to be somebody in the future I have to study. I do not want to grow up in the dump. I want to be a teacher and teach others everything that has been taught to me."

Ladies and gentlemen, every child deserves *espacios para crecer*. (Every child deserves spaces to grow.)

Dr Martin Luther King, Jr famously said that, "The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice." And that is true. But I would add that it does not bend all by itself. It bends because of the actions of great, progressive organizations like the ILO. It bends because of the actions of people of goodwill – like all of you in this hall – who are changing the world, one community, one village, one child at a time.

In the first decade since the adoption of Convention No. 182, acting together, we have made great progress in the fight against the worst forms of child labour.

So things are changing. And I can tell you, things are changing in my country. Those of you who may have been to Washington before, I can tell you it may look the same, but it is not. It is not, because we have a dynamic, progressive, new President of the United States who gets it and understands it. President Obama served with me on our labour committee and helped us in everything we could do to provide funds for these programmes. He gets it. And he understands that we have to make great

changes. And so now I can say, for the first time in a long time, I have a friend in the White House. And I can say, for the first time in a long time, so do you.

So thank you again Director-General Somavia for your outstanding global leadership on this issue and on so many issues of human rights and social and economic justice. And through you I thank all of you in this hall and all members of the ILO for what you are doing every day. Let us make it our goal, within the next decade, to finish the job. And of course, with the United States in these kinds of meetings and speeches, by echoing our President, "Yes we can!"

The PRESIDENT

Many thanks, Senator, for those remarks. I wish to commend you not only for emphasizing the role of the ILO in the global fight against child labour, but also for your warning that the fight is far from over and that the current economic crisis could, unless measures are put in place, increase incidences of child labour.

Mr BOTHA (*Employer, South Africa*)

I am deeply honoured and grateful to have received an invitation to come out of retirement and address the Conference plenary on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the coming into being of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). What is particularly pleasant is meeting old friends and seeing how many of them have grown younger. Also, to recall the superb roles played ten years ago by Sir Leroy Trotman, Mr Bequele, Ms Jankanish, Ms Smith, Ms Nevin, Mr Steyne and our Chairperson, Mr Atsain. And I am missing many of the people who played a strong role.

It is amazing to realize that ten years have passed since this plenary voted unanimously to bring Convention No. 182 into being. And by my count, 169 of the 183 member countries have now ratified the Convention. I am not sure that my arithmetic is correct.

The first World Day against Child Labour was launched in 2002. Judging by the number of events taking place this year, published on the ILO web site, the intention for the day to serve as a catalyst for the movement against child labour is profoundly successful. But I take Senator Harkin's points into mind. I come from a village that has 70 per cent unemployment, and I share his concern about where we are going. Poverty is a terrible thing.

The choice this year to focus on the situation of girls (more than a million of whom are involved in child labour in the world) and to give attention to the education and skills training needs of adolescent girls are key to tackling child labour and providing real opportunities for girls to gain decent work as adults. "Give girls a chance: End child labour".

Standing here before you brings back great moments of nostalgia – of children, at the climax of the global marches against child labour across the globe, singing in the plenary of the Conference, and it is wonderful to see you guys here again. They set the scene, and they put pressure on us as negotiators, and amongst the marchers were child activists who had worked in some of the appalling conditions the Convention would try to abolish. I remember the South African march that began with our Presi-

dent Nelson Mandela sending the children on their way from Robben Island.

My memories include those of meetings between the Worker and Employer spokespersons before embarking on the work of developing the Convention, and meetings with the chairperson and the ILO secretariat. We agreed to work together to achieve a clear, concise, focused and realistic text which could be universally ratifiable. Also, groups, countries and their spokespersons with whom it would be important to work were identified, for example, the European Union, continental groups, the United States Government and India.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were lobbying us and we importantly needed to work with them: to receive information and to develop relationships with them. We had to manage the Employers' group and give all representatives meaningful roles to play. Good long-term relationships developed from these meetings. Our Committee received superb support work from the International Organisation of Employers' representatives, and of course there were tensions too, within that group.

The finely tuned ILO processes for getting agreement, firstly within one's own constituency, then together with the chairperson, the ILO staff, the Workers and the Governments: side meetings, signals between spokespersons, agreements to discuss issues with those who did not agree or who, in our view, were missing the idea of a planned agreement are all fine memories. I was deeply impressed then with the institutional ways of diminishing potentially damaging conflicts.

The ILO meeting staff quietly lobbied the groups and the governments, promoting accord, and managing group expectations.

I remember the caucus meetings before formal meetings, when perceptions of agreements on process and substance sometimes unravelled because groups were not always as unified as we, the spokespersons, had hoped. The process of drafting was fascinating, when words sometimes had meanings that one had not anticipated.

But there was something unusual at play during the development of this particular Convention. I quote Mr Trotman (he was still a mister then) from his last speech to the plenary in support of the Convention, when he was offered asylum by myself and the representative from India: "It demonstrates the level of respect that the Government, the Employers' and the Workers' representatives have been able to bear one another, even though we were dealing with very sensitive issues, sometimes very difficult issues". It is a fact that the work of the Committee was achieved without a single vote being called in the two years of discussions.

I felt that there was a potentially new way of working in the process of development. I felt at the time that "the search for total consensus, as opposed to the use of simple majorities to 'indicate the views of the house' was and is a prerequisite for the widest possible ratification. The ILO is not new to deal-making in the corridors and coffee shops, but these deals are often precursors to a vote or are part of developing a *majority* view. Some parties to the coalition win and those not part of the deal may lose. The formal procedures enable positions to be taken and are publicly supported, defended and/or attacked. In our view this approach promotes adversarialism and conflict and produces winners and

losers and sometimes a sense of betrayal and often a sense of gratitude".

Of course, I recognize that child labour was a subject that in itself encouraged cooperation, but, again quoting from Sir Leroy Trotman: "We were willing, and I am glad to say that there was on all sides a consciousness that we do not necessarily have to do business now in the same way that we used to. What matters is that we remain focused and committed to the task before us, and I am very pleased to say that the shifts in paradigms have been to the advantage of this particular exercise, especially, I hope, to the advantage of the children who will benefit from our efforts."

I believe this contributed to the wonderful moment when the plenary voted unanimously in support of the instrument.

President Clinton arrived to address the Conference when we knew that this might have been aborted if agreements had not met the United States expectations and hopes.

The slow trickle, then rush of ratifications has changed the reality of the worst forms of child labour in the world.

Finally, we should all be proud of the institutional work which is being done to promote the Convention.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in drawing world attention to the problems relating to child labour, and I think that Senator Harkin has said all that needs to be said on the subject, but vive IPEC!

We should be encouraged by the personal work of the Director-General in persuading world leaders to support campaigns such as the Red Card to Child Labour, and others. We should laud the work of NGOs and politicians in many countries to draw attention to the effects around the world. The role of Senator Harkin should be specifically noted here.

Looking forward, I am proud of the Employers' role in the campaign to eliminate child labour. Apart from the obvious fact that employers are on the ground, as it were, and can ensure that their workplaces are in order, they support schooling and further education, and play a part in lobbying for progressive practices. Support for ratification, the development of guides on eliminating child labour and assistance in educating children who have been removed from poor conditions are just some of the actions taken in many employer constituencies.

I would like to end with another appeal for universal ratification of this instrument. The worst forms of child labour still exist in many parts of the world. Severe effects on health have not yet been ended; physical growth continues to be stunted; children's morals continue to be subverted; psyches are still damaged; and prospects of a full life remain obscure for many. Although this ILO Convention has been ratified by more countries than any other, by my count there are still six governments which I am surprised have not ratified it and introduced appropriate laws to give them powers to act appropriately against the perpetrators of child labour. There are also eight countries new to ILO membership or where political conditions may make ratification difficult at the moment.

Let us send a message that all the governments in the world, all the trade unions of the world, all the employers' organizations of the world will not tole-

rate children being hurt, psychologically abused, maimed or exploited ever again.

Mr TROTMAN (*Worker, Barbados*)

Allow me to say that this is a very emotional moment. There are times, particularly if you have been in public life and you are getting old, as I am, when you reflect upon what you have done throughout your years of public service, and you wonder if you have done anything to be proud of. And I believe that many of us have gone through that exercise from time to time.

It was my honour and pleasure to lead the debate, along with Bokkie Botha, on this issue and, as we reflect on those two years leading up to 1999, I must say, looking back, that it is something that I am proud to have been part of. Indeed, I believe that all those of us who worked long days and short nights to achieve our purpose would agree that we did a good thing – and that they are glad that we never gave up.

Those of us who were privileged to gather together again by the broken chair today, ten years later, must understand that the possibility did exist; and in many of our cases, a shed tear was very much part of the occasion.

Because, as our brother Kailash has said, and we should never forget the tremendous role he played, we can successfully record that some 30 million children have been saved from slavery – slavery of their minds and bodies. And that is something to be proud of. As we stood there watching children – particularly children from here in Switzerland who do not necessarily have this problem – we hoped that this symbolic occasion would be captured on television and seen by people all over the world, thus spurring us on to greater action.

Alongside brother Kailash, there were members of the Committee who have since joined the ILO staff, such as Simon Steyne; we still have Ms Jananish here, but I am sorry not to see Mr Atsain. There were many other people who gave of their time and energy and to whom I wish publicly to express, on behalf of the children, our tremendous appreciation. They did a great job at a time when it was most needed.

When we started out on this journey, we started as travellers with nothing in our pockets, except hope and the will to survive. The lesson we have learned from this venture is that if we dare hope – and if we can find the will – then perhaps we might succeed where the faint-hearted would fail.

We are pleased that we were able to take children out of the worst kinds of child labour and put them into education. In the ILO, and for us in the trade union movement, we like to insist on the fact that education is the way out of poverty.

The eradication of poverty is part of the remedy for taking people out of child labour. I do not accept the view that all child labour is the result of poverty, but most child labour has its roots somewhere within poverty.

We believe that we must educate out of that poverty. So we wish to thank those governments, employers and NGOs, as well as our own colleagues in the labour movement, who have worked towards taking people out of the worst kinds of poverty and educating them so that they might take their rightful place in society.

Having thanked governments and all those who took part in this campaign, it would be unreasonable

if we did not ask them to help us prevent people from falling back into old ways.

As Senator Harkin has said, we must recognize the lion at our door, the lion of poverty; it could so easily cause a situation in which less money and less time is spent on education, and in which people without an education, with limited opportunities, might find themselves falling back into poverty. If those persons who have come out of slavery and out of child labour are not given decent work, or are not given an opportunity to have trust and respect for their own persons and an opportunity to demonstrate their ability, then we shall forever have a problem. We must be careful to ensure that children can really choose for themselves, so that when they do enter the world of work they are given a voice; they must be given the freedom to associate with other like-minded people at their workplace and be able to enjoy freedom of association and join a trade union. They must have those rights.

Those governments that really wish to put their confidence in the future – and the future in the hands of their children – must understand that they have to respect trade union rights, as well as human rights, and give the youth of the world the chance to succeed.

The PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Officers of the Conference, I wish to thank all the panellists for their remarks today. Our panel of distinguished speakers all played an important role in the discussion on Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour ten years ago.

They have continued strongly to advocate and champion to combat child labour and, in particular, the worst forms of child labour.

We have heard that since being adopted in 1999 Convention No. 182 has become the ILO's most rapidly ratified Convention, reflecting the widespread international support for urgent action to tackle the worst forms of child labour.

The comments of the panel today reflect this strong and continuing commitment of the governments, employers and workers and their organizations for their work in eliminating the worst forms of child labour.

I should like to thank you all for your support and, in closing this session, I would like to once again invite our young musicians from Kenya to play a song for us.

Welcome again, Haba na Haba.

(Musical interlude)

(The sitting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.)

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

Mr SMYTHE (*Government, Australia*)

Forward with fairness is the principle that has guided the Australian Government in the recent overhaul of the national workplace relations regulatory framework. Since November 2007, our objective has been to bring the mutually supportive principles of fairness and proactivity to the centre of Australia's workplace relations system. This has been a major undertaking; exhaustive consultation with workers' and employers' groups, government

agencies and others, has meant that all have had the opportunity for their views and concerns to be heard and considered. Australia's new Fair Work Act puts in place a truly modern, comprehensive and fair system.

The Australian Government embarked on the design of its new workplace relations system fully conscious of our international commitments. Principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining are crucial within the broader architecture of human rights. Australia's Fair Work Act has placed collective bargaining in its rightful place at the centre of the Australian system. In this regard, we appreciate the comment last week by the Chair of the Committee of Experts. Referring to the Australian system, the Chair made special mention of the substantial improvement which has been made in terms of international commitments. Australia's Fair Work Act, built on the principle of forward with fairness, has ensured that the essence of international commitments under ratified ILO instruments is enshrined in Australia's workplace relations system.

It is now time to promote the principle of forward with fairness more broadly, to help achieve part of Millennium Development Goal 1, that is, to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all. We believe that the best way to do this is through a partnership with the international organization that makes fair and decent work its central aim.

The Australian Government is therefore delighted to announce that Australia is embarking upon a major new partnership agreement with the ILO. With funding to commence on 1 July 2010, this new five-year agreement will carry a commitment from Australia of AU\$15 million, to be applied in the first two years of the agreement.

The Australian Government intends that this expenditure will make a substantial contribution to achieving decent work in our part of the world.

We believe this donor investment is timely. The global financial and economic crisis has hit all parts of the globe, including Australia. But we recognize that, for many countries, there was already a crisis before the present one began.

In our own part of the region, even before the crisis began, there was a risk that a number of Pacific Island countries would not meet targets for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Without decisive action by the ILO, in conjunction with its constituents, we are in danger of falling short of reaching Millennium Development Goal 1 in the region.

We are confident that Australia's partnership agreement with the ILO will help bring about the decisive action needed to address the situation.

We welcome discussions which have taken place at this Conference on crisis recovery, on a new international labour standard for HIV/AIDS in the world of work, and on gender equality at the heart of decent work. All discussions are timely and vital, and their inclusion in the Conference ensures that the issues, and the ILO's contribution to solving them, are given the highest profile.

Domestically, Australia has responded to the global economic crisis with an integrated and comprehensive set of measures known as the Nation Building and Jobs Plan. This plan supports jobs and invests in future long-term economic growth. It incorporates support for retrenched workers, skills training,

a jobs fund, infrastructure investments, investment in the greening of jobs and numerous other coordinated measures. The Nation Building and Jobs Plan represents a major intervention to respond constructively to the crisis and to establish the basis for future growth. The plan also coheres with key social protection measures, such as the introduction of a paid parental leave scheme.

There are few international organizations with as much to offer in the context of the crisis as the ILO. The 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the Strategic Policy Framework, targeted and results-based programme and budgetary documents, research and analytical work on the greening of jobs, and a commitment to develop indicators of decent work and of field performance are crucial frameworks which have been put in place over the last year by the ILO. These frameworks have positioned the ILO well for decisive action now, as part of a coordinated global response by international bodies.

We look forward to the outcomes of the Conference to help the world respond to the crisis. It is our hope that we can all move forward with fairness.

Mr MASEMENE (*Minister of Labour and Employment, Lesotho*)

I note that it was a hard task for the Governing Body to decide on the agenda for the Conference and congratulate them on prioritizing the many issues. Although the issues of unemployment and social protection are not on the agenda, they have not been relegated to oblivion and may emerge during the course of our work.

In Lesotho, the Cabinet and Parliament are quite gender sensitive while the Judiciary is gender balanced. Local government is also gender balanced, although one might say that it is over gender balanced because women make up almost 58 per cent of local government. The Lesotho Government cherishes and upholds human rights as a whole, and human rights as they pertain to workers in particular.

The Lesotho Parliament enacted the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 2006. Hitherto, married women could not access bank loans but, since that legislation was passed, women can now access bank loans. They can also acquire property without the consent of their husbands. This move has gone a long way to empower women.

The Lesotho Government has a special ministry devoted to gender issues. Notwithstanding the progress made, there are still some bottlenecks concerning gender issues. We note that in the textile industry the bulk of the work is done by women, as sewing is still regarded as traditional women's role.

We are aware that the Committee on the Application of Standards plays an important role at the heart of the ILO Conference and we hope that the ILO will continue to provide technical assistance and support to enable us to implement the core Conventions of the ILO that we have ratified.

On HIV/AIDS, the Lesotho Parliament enacted the Labour Code (Amendment) Act 2006, under which policies and guidelines are being provided to the private sector. Workers affected by HIV and AIDS cannot be productive. The Government therefore provides proper medication.

Our textile industry, which is the largest earner, has been heavily affected by the economic meltdown and the financial crisis, which has been crea-

ting joblessness in every county, whether developed or developing. The diamond industry was becoming a source of prosperity in the Mountain Kingdom, but as diamonds are a luxury good and in times of difficulty people must prioritize, many mines are closing down. When diamond mines close, jobs are lost.

In the current scenario, we need to put our heads together and find the best way forward in the light of the global crisis because every cloud has a silver lining and many hands make light work.

It is fundamental that we focus on key issues, such as women's employment, youth employment and rural employment. Recent changes have led to an increase in unemployment in the agricultural sector, as well as other sectors, but I think if we work together we can succeed.

In conclusion, peace is the source of stability. When there is peace and stability people can plough the land, but we also need rain, in the form of support from the ILO and others partners, to help us be productive. That is why our motto is "peace, rain and plenty".

Original Arabic: Mr LOUH (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Algeria)

For many years, from this forum, we have drawn attention to the dangers of unemployment. It hinders access to conditions for a decent life for the many people in the world who suffer from it. In many cases, it is fertile breeding ground for various forms of extremism, including international terrorism.

Unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, affects all countries today and everyone agrees that its negative effects are a threat to international peace and stability.

However, over the years, unemployment, instead of declining, has worsened as a result of the global financial crisis, which has become an economic crisis. The resulting loss of jobs may well reach 59 million across the world, according to the estimates of the Director-General of the ILO in his Report for 2009.

The renewed outbreak and increasing unemployment may well exacerbate social conflicts and heighten tensions in international relations as a result of the expected increase in migration.

The global economic and financial crisis has exposed the dysfunctions of the international financial system and the inability of the Bretton Woods institutions to prevent and tackle it. This is a result of the deregulation of the production mechanism throughout the world. The need to reform this system has now become a concern shared by the international community as a whole.

Like the world of work, which is governed by principles and standards established by the ILO, the global financial system should also be based on principles and standards which, without calling into question the rules of the market economy, would ensure a balance between economic efficiency and social justice.

Algeria, which has opted for a market economy, has, over the last five years, directed more than US\$160 billion towards the strengthening of its basic infrastructure, such as the road network, ports, railways and waterworks. This will continue over the next five years, as US\$150 billion has now been allocated to continuing and consolidating the process of development as part of the programme drawn up by our President for the 2010–14 period,

notwithstanding the effects of the global economic crisis on our country's revenue.

Alongside this, reforms to banking and customs systems and the meeting of conditions for promoting productive investment, in particular through the recent decision taken by His Excellency Mr Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the Republic, to establish a national investment fund.

Furthermore, as part of our campaign to tackle unemployment, the rate of which has fallen from 30 per cent in 1999 to 11.3 per cent in 2008, an action plan to promote employment has been adopted.

This employment plan is based on encouraging investment that will create jobs, on skills and training, on promoting the spirit of entrepreneurship in young people, and on a reduction in taxes to benefit enterprises.

Human development indicators for 2008 show the effectiveness of the steps that have been taken. Schooling levels have reached 97 per cent, connections to electricity are at around 99 per cent, connections to the drinking water network are at 93 per cent, the daily drinking water allocation is 165 litres per inhabitant, connections to the sewage system have now reached 85 per cent, and life expectancy is now 76 years of age.

On this, the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the ILO and World Day Against Child Labour, which is celebrated on 12 June each year, I would like to draw the attention of the international community to the inhuman practices that the occupying authorities inflict, on a daily basis, on the Palestinian people, as well as the very serious infringements of the rights of Palestinian children, including the right to life.

The worsening in their living conditions, which were already unbearable, has been exacerbated by the bombings and by the embargo on Palestinian workers, which means that they are unable to reach their workplace or use their means of production.

We call on the international community, the United Nations and the parties that are sponsoring the peace process to shoulder their responsibilities in order to restore the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to establish their own independent State in the territory of Palestine, with Al-Quds as capital, in keeping with the constitutive decisions of international law.

Original Russian: Mr IVANKEVYCH (Government, Ukraine)

I would like to thank the ILO and its Director-General, Mr Somavia, as well as his staff of highly qualified experts, for the efforts they have made in a common search for solutions to promote social justice and create conditions for decent work in the context of overcoming the consequences of our global financial crisis.

Despite the complex economic situation in Ukraine, our Government guarantees to its citizens that it will maintain the current level of social benefit levels, support current wage levels, and promote employment and social protection.

In the first quarter of this year, in the Ukrainian labour market, we have seen a reassuring growth in employment and a corresponding decrease in unemployment. Despite the spurt of unemployment in the fourth quarter, employment last year grew by 3.6 per cent. The percentage of our working population that is employed went from 58.7 per cent to 59.3 per cent. Unemployment in 2008 remained at the 2007 level of 6.4 per cent. We should note that

unemployment in Ukraine is lower than the Eastern European average.

Ukraine has felt the impact of the global financial crisis which literally pounded the labour market in the fourth quarter of last year. While in recent years the number of jobs available was essentially equal to the number of jobseekers, in a labour market characterized by a significant deficit of skilled workers, at the end of last year there was a sharp rise in the number of registered unemployed and a sharp fall in the number of jobs available.

The number of economically motivated lay-offs grew by one third in December, and twice as many jobseekers as usual were registered by the government employment service.

In order to mitigate the situation, we drafted and adopted a law on reducing the impact on employment of the global financial crisis, which entered into force on 13 January this year. The law provides for incentives to enterprises allowing them to retain workers on a part-time basis, or to launch employee retraining programmes for workers, using their company's unemployment funds. The law also provides for the introduction of new jobs through public work programmes.

At the request of the heads of large agricultural enterprises, we are now examining the possibility of legally conferring upon these enterprises the right to draw on the ranks of the officially unemployed to perform up to 30 hours of essential work per month.

At the same time, in order to provide for productive employment of agricultural workers, the Government has adopted a long-term programme to create agricultural cooperatives. Today, there are roughly 1,200 such agricultural cooperatives in our country and in the near future we expect the number to grow to up to 10,000.

We highly value the expertise of the ILO in our country in helping to reform labour legislation and to create a national policy to promote decent work and social dialogue. We trust that this cooperation will continue to bear fruit in the future. This cooperation is extremely important to us in connection with the need to further reform our social insurance system and introduce a system of compulsory medical insurance.

We totally support the proposals contained in the Director-General's Report on *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, regarding jobs as a component of a Global Jobs Pact. The experience of other countries in overcoming the crisis, which was made available to us thanks to the ILO, has been priceless.

However, the results of this crisis have demonstrated that our world will never again be the same. Both the global economy and many national economies require completely new approaches. It will take a long time to return to previous levels of industrial production.

Millions of citizens around the world lack food, housing and basic social services. This is especially the case for the elderly, the disabled and families with children. For this reason we suggest using the opportunity provided by the crisis to make our society more caring. Social services require significant human resources, and private initiatives supported by the Government can provide the global economy in the near future with millions of new jobs.

I hope that the ILO will support our initiative.

In conclusion, I would like once again to thank the ILO for having given us the opportunity to exchange our views on how to overcome the crisis.

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

It is a great pleasure for me to address the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that, under the leadership of the Director-General, the current session will achieve complete success and I would like to commend the Director-General and his competent staff for the well-researched and comprehensive Report submitted to the Conference.

The Report contains a detailed account of the Organization's work as part of its major contributions to overcoming the challenges that the world of work is faced with following the global financial crisis and economic recession. For the poor, unemployed and underdeveloped, the impact of this crisis will aggravate the already difficult situation they have had to face.

Although some may believe that countries that are less integrated into the global economy are less affected by the global financial crisis, research shows that low-income countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, are likely to be affected indirectly through various channels. The prices of export commodities and foreign direct investment are expected to decline, remittances will drop and development partners may be forced to cut their aid. Most seriously, the livelihood of our people will be affected as millions of jobs that remain might not be what we would call decent jobs. As a result, our efforts towards poverty reduction and development will be disrupted. Hence, as livelihoods are threatened all over the world, the need to link employment promotion, poverty alleviation and social progress becomes all the more imperative.

Ethiopia, like many other low-income countries all over the world, is struggling to cope with the global economic crisis. Our Government's commitment to reducing poverty has been, and still is, very strong. It has put in place more credible and functioning policies, strategies and programmes that are in line with the realities of the country. The existing focus on human capital formation, infrastructure expansion, addressing vulnerability to shocks, the decentralization and empowerment process, and the capacity-building programme are all aimed at speeding up the transformation process on all fronts.

In addition, the fight against unemployment has been one of the major concerns of Ethiopia. In this connection, it is important to recognize the fact that various policies and strategies have been put forward aimed at creating the necessary conditions for socio-economic advancement and attendant structural adjustments to address these challenges. The agricultural development-led industrialization strategy, which our country is pursuing as the best development path, focuses on the adequate utilization of the country's labour resources. Industrialization being the ultimate goal of this strategy, much of our focus in industrial development is also on labour-intensive agro-processing industries. Moreover, our Government strongly believes that the private sector should be the biggest employer; and thus, our efforts are directed in particular at creating an environment that is conducive to the smooth operation of the private sector in the country.

As always, Ethiopia values its continuing partnership with the ILO highly. The relations between the country and the ILO have developed steadily over the years. The need to develop a full understanding of the global economic crisis and the need to discuss the implications of coherent policies for growth and decent work provide a new opportunity for us to explore ways and means of strengthening that partnership. It was following the realization of the possible negative consequences of the global financial crisis that the symposium Poverty Reduction through Decent Work was held in Ethiopia on 23 April 2009 as one of the national events organized to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the creation of the ILO. We commend the relevance of the theme of the symposium, which underpins the commitment of our Government to end poverty through a series of multi-sectoral strategies enshrined in its plan for accelerated and sustained development.

Hence, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm my country's commitment to cooperate with the ILO in advancing decent employment opportunities, especially at this critical time when the world is battling one of the worst global economic crises since the Great Depression.

In conclusion, I wish the Director-General and his staff every success in their efforts to see the Organization play its role with renewed commitment as it advances towards completing its first century in 2009. We look forward to a better world with more innovative and effective approaches to addressing the pressing priorities of people today.

Ms MPARIWA (*Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe*)

The Report of the Director-General, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, comes at an opportune time as the effects of the global financial crisis are being strikingly felt in the world of work.

In the case of my country, the repercussions of the raging turmoil of the global financial crisis have converged with the effects of a continued period of negative gross domestic product growth rates, low productive capacity, job losses, massive deindustrialization, food shortages and general poverty, under which the country has been reeling. Thus, even before the onset of the global financial crisis, my country was battling with job deficits in various sectors of the economy.

The sharp decline in commodity prices resulting from reduced global demand and economic growth has resulted in many enterprises in my country scaling down operations. These effects have been gravely felt in the mining sector, where the fall in the prices of minerals such as platinum, nickel and gold have seen many mines close down – inevitably leading to massive retrenchment and layoffs at a time when enterprises cannot afford to pay the concerned workers decent retrenchment packages. Suffice to mention also that the significant cuts in the export receipts owing to low capacity utilization in various sectors of our economy have led to a significant drop in Government revenue, thus negatively impacting on social security and economic recovery programmes meant to generate employment.

It is gratifying to note that amidst this gloom, the people of Zimbabwe have resolved to confront the challenges as a united front. The new political dispensation ushered in by the Inclusive Government

has given hope to every Zimbabwean, and I can assertively inform you that there is commitment from all parties to put the country back on the path to growth.

It is against this background that my Government has crafted a battery of measures and programmes aimed at stimulating growth in the strategic sectors of the economy. In this regard, the Government of Zimbabwe has introduced the Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP) with a view to stabilizing the economy and also lay the foundation for economic growth. The Government has also developed the 100-day plan to give practical effect to STERP. Under this plan, government ministries are divided into five clusters, each with specific key result areas to be accomplished in the 100 days spanning to the first week of August 2009. The vision of the social cluster under which my ministry falls aims, among other goals, to achieve sustained social dialogue and develop sound social protection mechanisms. This vision finds resonance in the underlying principle of the Director-General's Report, that the sustainable exit option out of the crisis should be rooted in the employment and social protection mix.

It is against this background that I call upon the ILO and other strategic partners to provide support to the social partners in my country for the successful adoption and implementation of the draft employment policy, among other objectives.

My Government greatly values social dialogue and, as such, I can assure you that all our efforts in this regard will be underpinned with tripartite consultations under the auspices of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF). I can inform you that efforts are underway to strengthen sustained social dialogue among the social partners in Zimbabwe. Accordingly I call upon the ILO to fully support this process.

I take this opportunity to voice my Government's support of the Global Jobs Pact proposed in the Director-General's Report.

Allow me to thank many countries represented here that have extended their support to the Government of Zimbabwe in our times of need, and most importantly to the recovery programme. Let me inform you that we have a common resolve not to fail the people of Zimbabwe. Accordingly your support will go a long way towards assisting Zimbabwe realize our much-required goal for the nation that we want as a people.

Original Arabic: Mr HUSAIN (Worker, Bahrain)

Today we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of our International Labour Organization which, at its inception in 1919, heralded a new era of social partnership, social justice and social dialogue.

I would like to dwell for a moment on some key issues for our trade union movement.

First of all, as regards the global financial crisis, millions of workers throughout the world are paying the price of a crisis that was not of their making. The beginning of the crisis in our country was marked by a reluctance to announce its effects, although a reluctance to talk about it has not made it disappear; on the contrary, it has deepened. At first we said that our country would not be affected by the crisis, but it was no time at all before we started hearing daily reports of lay-offs and administrative abuses on the pretext of the crisis, as well as the denial of customary benefits, reductions in pay and

other practices prompted by the crisis. There followed successive waves of lay-offs from the banking and building sectors. Our trade union was not in the sidelines when it came to the effects of the crisis. At the outset, we called for the establishment of a tripartite committee to tackle the effects of the crisis, but the decision was delayed, on the pretext that it was "better to let sleeping dogs lie". But the crisis has now well and truly awakened, while some of us were sleeping. Our trade union movement is reaching out in a joint effort. We would like to emphasize the importance today of a legal framework that will put a high price on lay-offs. We need to have more transparency in both public and private sectors in order to better assess the real impact of the crisis. For how can a bank or business claim to be suffering from the financial crisis when it is laying off the lowest paid workers, but keeping on the managerial staff whose salaries are many times higher? Why should it be only the workers who are paying the price? There should be laws and administrative decisions that ensure that everyone bears the burden of the crisis.

Now that the tripartite committee has been set up in our country, we will endeavour to play an effective role on it, in order to protect the right to work and workers' rights.

As regards the right to organize, tens of thousands of workers in the public sector are still denied the right to form a trade union, a right enshrined in the Constitution of our country and the national charter, as well as Conventions and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. But, we are still suffering from the effects of abusive administrative decisions against all those who dare to claim their trade union rights in that sector. This prohibition does not only apply to rights, but to economic aspects too. Reductions on expenditure and the effects of the crisis have frozen recruitment and eliminated overtime and annual wage increases, and reduced bonuses while increasing the workload, and have led to privatization. All of this is happening without an organization on the workers' side to defend workers' rights against all these pressures. We call for more pressure to allow the exercise of the right to organize in the public sector.

As regards freedom of movement of workers, when we speak of international labour standards, we are not talking about double standards. We believe in the decision taken by the Ministry of Labour in the context of labour market reform. But, if the crisis has repercussions on the labour market, and on the two sides of labour, workers and employers, these should not be dealt with by sacrificing international labour standards or imposing forced labour. Rather, we need to have a plan, in which we are one of the parties, in order to strengthen the capacities of small, medium-sized and micro-enterprises to mitigate the effects of the crisis. And freedom of movement is part and parcel of a decent work system which includes free choice, equality and human dignity.

With regard to the crisis experienced by the Palestinian people, during the first quarter of this year the entire world witnessed the effects of the Israeli aggression on the people of the Gaza strip, which affected everyone, and especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Our organization, which is celebrating its 90th anniversary, has a moral duty to help these afflicted people to cope with the aftermath of the war and live a decent life, and provide

decent work to hundreds of thousands of Palestinian workers. The world must not allow more years to go by without this people being able to attain its legitimate dream of self-determination and the establishment of an independent State.

Mr REDFERN (*Minister of Labour and Human Resources Development, Kiribati*)

The Government of Kiribati continues to support the ILO in its strong conviction to pursue its basic goal of decent work, and it is in this regard that the Government of Kiribati had approved the ratification of the remaining four core Conventions that Kiribati has not yet ratified. This includes: the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The formal instrument of accession for these Conventions will be submitted soon, hopefully before the end of this session of Conference.

The Government of Kiribati wishes to thank this Conference for giving special attention to the issues related to globalization and the global financial crisis, which had adversely affected member countries in one form or another.

With much of the Government reserve funds invested in overseas financial institutions, the funds continue to be subjected to the fluctuations of the global financial markets. Since the beginning of the global financial crisis last year, a substantial amount of loss in the value of the funds has been encountered.

In addition, Kiribati relied on the global maritime labour market for employment opportunities for our seafarers, and this has also been adversely affected by the financial crisis. Kiribati is now faced with limited employment opportunities abroad, resulting in an increase in unemployment and a decrease in the level of remittances. Furthermore, the heavy reliance of the people of Kiribati, especially those living in urban areas, on imported food items for their living had made them vulnerable to the soaring prices of imported food items.

Efforts have been made by the Government to properly address the impact of the global financial crisis and, at this juncture, I would like to thank the ILO for the expertise and the financial assistance offered to the Government of Kiribati in formulating the Decent Work Country Programme for the period 2008–12 and the National Action Plan for Youth Employment. Both placed special emphasis on the creation of employment opportunities domestically, through the creation of business opportunities and self-employment for the youth, and enhancing and improving human resource development to give the local workforce easier access to the regional and global labour markets.

While efforts are being made by the member countries to properly address the impact of the global financial crisis, the adverse impact of climate change, particularly the adverse impact of the rise in sea level on low-lying nations, should also be given equal attention by this Conference. The rise in sea level now questions the very existence of low-lying nations such as Kiribati.

As a strategy to counter the impending threat of sea level rise, the Government of Kiribati is now giving top priority to the training and retraining of our workers and unemployed youths to a skill and

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, our Government has to focus on offshore employment as a priority in its employment policy. A few pilot initiatives with our development donor partners have already begun, which allows 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 allows our workers to be exposed and to adapt to a different working environment, 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. The Government of Kiribati would favour a more strategic approach, in line with national priorities, that focuses on skills development and allows for greater worker mobility, employability, adaptability and productivity to respond to the impact of climate change.

Mr SYED MOHAMUD (*Worker, Malaysia*)

The global economic crisis has caused great stress and, perhaps more appropriately, distress among the vast majority of the world's population. Here, I am not referring to the shareholders of corporate giants that lay in ruins, but the common people who work hard and honestly for their living.

We were on a train heading in the wrong direction, fuelled by greed and predicated on some very immoral principles. It was touted as the age of "Great Moderation", where the economy was not to have seen a major recession, let alone the economic catastrophe that is being experienced.

It is a world heavily in debt, and the greatest disservice that is now being done to humanity is that we will leave future generations saddled with the debt created by our excesses.

It is a world where the rich are being protected at the expense of the masses. The common taxpayer has bailed out the large corporations, the rationale being that these corporations have become too big to fail. While there is much sense in that in the present times, we must ask ourselves the question why such organizations have been allowed to expand unsustainably to such an extent.

It is also ironic that the very same taxpayers who are bailing out these corporations are losing their jobs. It is a very unhealthy equation and only more moral forms of regulations can prevent such things from happening again.

The income divide has grown to such an extent that it is simply not sustainable, even in the short term. Greed has, to a large extent, caused this crisis, created through the many get-rich-quick schemes of executive compensation, conjured up by large corporations, mainly in the financial services industry.

A more proportionate income distribution is required, so that society can progress in a reasonable manner without having to experience gyrations in the economy that impoverish people and countries.

It is undeniable that the global governance architecture has failed the people of the world. It is not too difficult to correct the situation, though what is required is some honesty and the wherewithal and courage to dispose of greed and deal with the greedy.

This is the point where the world simply has to react and take the necessary steps to deliver for the populations, with the ILO promoting the Employment Guarantee Convention. It had been an intermittent demand of the labour movement to provide such assurances on a national scale. The ILO should take ownership of this idea for discussion and implementation. The payment to workers would be a fraction of what they are entitled to.

Economic insecurity is an overwhelming factor of vulnerability for workers, not only at the workplace, but also elsewhere in the community. Therefore, the guarantee of employment at the minimum wage is an obvious source of individual bargaining power. In this context, workers can come together to demand better working conditions, higher wages, functional public services and accountable government.

Besides creating jobs, this employment guarantee scheme gives workers the foundation of other social and economic rights, such as the right to food or the right to education. This is how "political will" is likely to be generated, not through the kindness of political leaders.

In the final analysis, this employment guarantee scheme will deliver real benefits, in the immediate and long term, in economic, social and political conditions, in improving governance, public policy and in realizing decent work for all.

Original Portuguese: Mr GARCIA (Employer, Brazil)

Brazilian employers are concerned with social issues, in particular those concerning inequalities, which are the result of unfair income distribution and have widened the gap between rich and poor and resulted in high poverty levels. The Brazilian employers have created an environment that promotes collaboration with the public sector for sustainable development. It is not enough to create new jobs; opportunities for social development need to be promoted through employment that will provide workers with decent living conditions and decent work.

Decent work is productive work that is adequately remunerated, carried out in conditions of freedom, equity and safety, without any discrimination and can guarantee a decent life to those who make a living from it, according to the ILO.

We would therefore note three aspects which are central to the responsibility of the employers: the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour and the effective abolition of child labour; elimination of discrimination in employment; and the need to maintain job levels.

We are seeking sustainable development that is based on decent work in order to break the vicious circle of poverty, promote social inclusion through employment, increase real salaries, and prioritize social justice and also a strategy to expand domestic demand, which is essential for consolidating development. Therefore, employment, basic social protection, respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue are the basis of our relations with governments and workers' organizations.

An example of this is our concern for basic education and training of young people, as well as adult workers, to prepare them for the labour market.

We should also note the employers' involvement in projects against discrimination on the basis of race, gender and sexual-orientation in the Brazilian labour market. In Brazilian law, access of people with disabilities to work is assured. The crisis should not in any way jeopardize women's jobs. Women often have a dual role as they are often responsible for supporting their families.

It is essential that we maintain jobs during the crisis, as well as productivity and decent work. We have to make efforts to avoid unemployment and the impoverishment of workers.

Even given the backdrop of economic recession, the Brazilian economy saw a 5 per cent increase in new jobs last year, according to data from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. This was the result of the efforts and determination of Brazilian employers, who are in discussions with the Government and workers' representatives to find viable alternatives to maintain employment, despite the economic recession. This attitude of the employers has minimized the impact of the financial crisis by maintaining and creating new jobs.

The Institute of the Confederation of Agriculture and Cattle Raising of Brazil (CAN) represents small, medium and large agricultural producers, who account for 35 per cent of GDP and 37 per cent of employment in the Brazilian economy, which is still marked by inequalities and precarious conditions of work. Therefore, we are playing a pioneering role, in particular through the observatory on social vulnerability in the countryside. We are seeking, together with Government and non-governmental institutions, to identify social needs and provide the social protection necessary to change the situation. We believe that it is the responsibility of all of us to change the history of this country, given its potential for opportunity and our ambition to make it a country with possibilities for everyone.

The reduction of poverty is only possible with rapid and sustainable economic development; by building a bridge between the social and the economic spheres and between all of Brazil's diversity.

Given the potential for decent work opportunities in our economy, Brazil compares favourably with most developing countries with regard to our freedom to ensure economic growth with a reasonable density of employment. The two main points here, GDP growth and the creation of decent work, are complementary.

Given this approach, I think employment in Brazil is something we can be fairly optimistic about in the future. The country is in a position to ensure decent work for all. This is the central objective of inclusive development, which is sustainable in the medium term, and will integrate the social, economic and environmental spheres. It is therefore necessary for public authorities, employers, workers and the tertiary sector to work together to ensure sustainable employment policies.

Original Farsi: Mr EGHBALI (Employer, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The year 2009 is significant in many ways for the ILO. We are celebrating its 90th anniversary in a context of a crisis.

The International Labour Conference is holding a general discussion on responses to the crisis, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and its challenges in the workplace, and also fundamental principles and rights at work.

In the lead-up to these discussions, the ILO embarked on a global public awareness-raising initiative on issues in the world of work. These efforts will be part of its overall decent work campaign and will contribute to the celebration of its 90th anniversary.

As an Employers' delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran, I want to emphasize the importance of decent work for all women and men, because work is central to people's well-being. In addition to providing income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement and strengthen individuals, their families and communication. Such progress, however, requires work that is decent.

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. We, as the employers, are devoted to advancing opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. The main aims of decent work are to promote rights at work, encourage employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen social dialogue.

As a result, particular attention must be paid to gender equality at work. Gender equality and non-discrimination have been fundamental principles of the work of the ILO since its creation. All ILO standards apply equally to men and women. In addition, the ILO has adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy to actively redress gender-based inequalities in policies, programmes and projects to enable both women and men to participate and equally benefit from development efforts.

The present crisis is an opportunity to rethink policies of the past, promote innovative patterns of growth and secure a fair, inclusive and sustainable globalization. Government enterprises, trade unions and civil society should effectively address mounting inequalities, take up environmental concerns and promote sustainable development and decent work.

What international policies and frameworks can help to promote a global economy that works for the workers, the poor and the vulnerable? How can poor economies share the wealth of the developed economies? What should be the role of social dialogue, tripartism and involvement of social partners? How can we prevent the occurrence of a similar crisis in the future? How can the employers, the ILO and multilateral systems assist? These are the questions that we face and the only answer, at least in my opinion, is decent work, of which gender equality is the heart.

Ms HASSEN (Minister of Labour and Human Welfare, Eritrea)

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the ILO for bringing up the timely issue of the current economic crisis at this 98th Session of the Conference. I would like to congratulate and thank Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, for his wide-ranging and fair presentation of the topic in *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*, which puts employment and social protection at the core of recovery policies. Furthermore, the Global Jobs Pact aims to ensure

better employment and social protection outcomes in dealing with the crisis.

The Report expressed the severity of the impact of the world economic crisis on global jobs and social protection. It calls on countries to consider whatever action is necessary to protect workers and their families, in the formal and informal economies, while also supporting enterprises, in order to hasten recovery and lay the foundations for a sustainable pattern of environmentally sound economic and social development.

We share the conviction of the ILO Director-General and I would like now to illustrate briefly what the Government of Eritrea has been doing in recent years.

Social justice and equity has been the basis for all our policies since pre-independence. We are striving for the equal distribution of wealth and balanced development between urban and rural areas, administrative regions, ethnic groups and genders. To date, despite our limited resources and limited skilled manpower, immense work has been done and impressive achievements have been scored in various domains, especially in education, health, agriculture, communication and infrastructure.

The Government of Eritrea believes that the national reconstruction process of the country must be centred on educational reform. Thus, high-level educational institutions, colleges, skill training centres and schools at all levels have been established to provide a skilled labour force. The quality of education is also improving gradually. Along with this, remarkable efforts have been made to provide high-quality and efficient health services to ensure a healthy workforce across the country. As a result, several health facilities, including referral hospitals, maternity and paediatric health centres have been constructed. Rural and urban dwellers are equally enjoying access to social services.

In the case of transportation, tens of thousands of kilometres of asphalted and secondary roads, as well as housing complexes, have been constructed. Marine and air transport infrastructure facilities are also being improved. Similarly, key achievements have been registered in the other sectors of the economy, including fisheries and tourism.

Besides promoting the provision of social services, the Government is extensively investing in agriculture, in which the majority of the population are engaged. The food security strategy, which constitutes the basis of our all-round development, is one of the highest priorities. To achieve this, the Government is implementing immense national projects, such as building dams, water diversion schemes, water reservoirs and preparing infrastructure systems, as well as introducing industrial agriculture in different areas of the country. At regional level, the construction of micro-dams, and water and soil conservation programmes are helping to enhance agricultural productivity.

This transition from traditional agriculture to modern agriculture generates employment, including in rural non-farm activities, and encourages small and medium-sized enterprises to participate and use agricultural products as their main processing inputs, which ultimately reduces poverty and generates sustainable long-term growth.

As to gender mainstreaming, the Government is highly committed and gender equality is properly addressed and promoted across Eritrea. Thirty per cent of its political seats at all levels are reserved for

women. To date, 24 per cent of the Cabinet ministers and 30 per cent of the national and regional parliamentarians are women. However, there is a wide gap that needs to be bridged in the middle level through proper educational and skills training.

As part of social security, a pension scheme has been launched very recently and we are going to introduce other social security schemes and establish broad-based social protection as the situation allows.

All the aforementioned efforts are being made by the Government, taking account of the country's national resources, within the decent work perspective to ensure better employment and social protection. Though positive achievements have been scored, there is a long way to go to realize the sustainable economic development of the country. The Government believes that, if the social partners work together through social dialogue, it will increase the likelihood of the success of the long-term vision of self-reliance and food security-oriented development.

In conclusion, the global financial crisis is having a global effect, but that effect seems to be compounded in the developing countries, since the unemployment problem in the developing countries has not been caused only by the current financial crisis.

The problem of the global financial crisis needs to be further analysed in order to arrive soon at simple and understandable policies that can be practically implemented and measured to see objectively whether the crisis is slowing down. Some countries might need both financial and technical support and those needs should be met as part of the solution to the economic crisis. Finally, real political commitment and healthy dialogue will contribute to finding the solution.

Mr QARQUEEN (*Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Afghanistan*)

On behalf of the delegation from my country I would like to extend my congratulations to the President on his election at this 98th Session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to wish him every success in achieving valuable results from the Conference and I am sure that under his leadership and guidance, we will be able to achieve the results envisaged for the Conference.

Afghanistan has ratified ILO Conventions Nos 182, 144 and 159, and the amendment to article 19 of the ILO Constitution. The legal process for ratification of these instruments has been finalized.

Three decades of war have affected the economic infrastructure and more than 42 per cent of Afghans are living below the poverty line. The economy relies mainly on agriculture and a large number of people residing in rural areas, mainly engaged in agriculture, livestock and gardening, have lost their jobs and come to the cities due to a lack of attention to the expansion of agriculture and the livestock sector.

Small-scale local enterprises which are running their activities in the traditional manner are facing inactivity due to the lack of ability to compete with imported goods. People who were engaged in this sector have also become unemployed. Moreover, the creation of employment has not been taken into consideration very much in most of the development projects which are under way or which have already been implemented. Hence the unemploy-

ment issue remains a major challenge facing the Government and the people.

Based on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, poverty reduction is one of the priorities of the Government of Afghanistan in order to address unemployment and reduce poverty. We have given much attention to vocational training and we have made great achievements in this regard.

In the past, vocational training was provided only through limited governmental training centres, but now 537 governmental and non-governmental institutions are providing vocational training in the country and this field is expanding. The percentage of trainees in vocational education centres increased by about 125 per cent last year and 80 per cent of the graduates of these centres have been integrated into the labour market and have found employment.

We have also given consideration to sending Afghan workers abroad for employment purposes. The legal ground has been prepared for sending workers abroad and licenses have been granted to the private sector in this area. But the above-mentioned measures are not the only solution to this problem. To solve this problem investment is needed in the fields of industry, agriculture, energy, water and mining and further efforts are needed towards job creation in the development projects.

Work has started on drafting and developing the national employment strategy for Afghanistan with the cooperation of the ILO, but due to some technical problems the process is going very slowly. Hence, we need further assistance from the ILO and donor countries in that regard and also with regard to expanding vocational training and encouraging investment in productive and job-creating areas to solve the problem of unemployed people.

As you are aware, we have developed a social protection strategy for people with disabilities in compliance with the ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159). Also, an action plan has been approved for people with disabilities, and work is under way on the economic integration component of the action plan. More attention is being given to self-sufficiency for disabled persons.

Furthermore, taking into account the importance of gender, the Government of Afghanistan has undertaken particular policies and projects for the creation of equal education opportunities, skills development and the recruitment of women. Based on the identified benchmark of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the percentage of female workers is expected to reach 30 per cent by the year 2010. Moreover, in vocational training programmes, 35 per cent are expected to be women. In the past seven years a positive change in the lives of women has occurred and progress has been made with regard to the economic and social position of women.

Based on international standards, the Government of Afghanistan has specific programmes on HIV/AIDS-related issues. A major HIV/AIDS control programme is being implemented by the country's Ministry of Public Health with the cooperation of other organizations to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country. Also, a national harm reduction and HIV strategy has been approved and awareness-raising programmes have been launched all over the country through media, mosques and workshops.

It is worth mentioning that a project for capacity building and the effective implementation of labour

law is being implemented to build the capacity of judges, workers, employers and other residents of the country. We urge the ILO and friendly countries to provide assistance in this regard.

In conclusion, in addition to expressing appreciation for the support of the ILO, friendly countries and donors, I would like to express our preparedness for the implementation of the conclusions of this Conference.

(Mr Zellhoefer takes the Chair.)

Mr MAIPAKAI (*Minister for Labour and Industrial Relations, Papua New Guinea*)

On behalf of the delegation of the Government of Papua New Guinea, I wish to acknowledge the International Labour Organization's efforts to take on the challenge of tackling the current jobs crisis, and its other related duties as evident in the agendas placed before this Conference, in particular, the establishment of the Committee of Whole to address this issue of job losses.

The ILO, under the leadership of the Director-General, has once again shown its efficiency and ability to present reports that are of value and inspiration to humanity. These reports have once again presented the reality of the situation that must be addressed as we embark on the unprecedented challenge of ensuring that decent work is achieved and sustained for our people amidst the backdrop of global economic recession.

While we can take comfort in some aspects of these issues, the challenge will remain for as long as the world continues to change. This is an inevitable reality which faces us and, as expressed by the Chairperson of the Governing Body in his opening remarks, we need to find a balance between all the evolving issues.

Placing emphasis on the elimination of forced and compulsory labour as the theme of the Conference this year is to be applauded. The challenge has been set and it is now incumbent on individual countries to comply with the various standards to eradicate forced labour. My Government recognizes that forced labour is a problem to human and national development. As such, it has committed itself to the precepts of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up.

The ratification of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the present amendments to our national labour laws reflect the spirit and intentions of these Conventions as well as the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in law and practice at the national level.

My Government will continue to adopt measures that are beneficial to the welfare and rights of citizens and, for this reason, the ILO can be assured that the country is adequately covered, at the national level, with regard to the fight against forced labour. The Government is appreciative and supportive of the ILO-IPEC programme on child labour, which has expanded the scope of the fight against forced labour to include children – the future workers and citizens of the country. As a recipient country, Papua New Guinea acknowledges and thanks the ILO and the European Union for this programme.

The present global economic recession, which has led to massive job losses, remains a nightmare for

us all. It has unwittingly bestowed on us the responsibility and onus to formulate workable strategies that can be addressed in a global programme.

My Government commends the ILO for taking the lead in using the unique structure of its tripartite mechanism and this excellent forum, to constructively debate on the imminent issues at hand and arrive at practical solutions to minimize global job losses.

I must express my Government's support for the ILO's vision in coming up with this issue for discussion, the level of expertise and experience in finding the right approaches to the problem, and the blending of national best practices for a collective and collaborative way forward. My country is grateful for this best possible start in addressing the problem.

At this Conference, we agree that there are no quick fixes because of the complexities and magnitude with which this global economic recession is affecting national and global workforces. However, the reliability of the Conference in formulating approaches and best practices from past global crises, is a testimony to our resolve and we can once more apply such measures for the current global jobs crisis.

Papua New Guinea, as a member of a global community, is feeling the effects of this crisis. However, not to the degree and extent of many of the other developing countries because our financial institutions are not global players in the financial business markets and ours is mainly a rural subsistence economy. This, however, does not mean that we are immune to the situation, as my country is currently developing its natural resource base. We are conscious of the need to be proactive in our approach and to work together with the global voices that are focused on addressing this issue.

In relation to other matters before the Conference, my Government applauds the ILO for placing on the agenda the issue of HIV and AIDS, which is now becoming a major concern in the world of work. As a nation, we have introduced the National HIV Management and Prevention Act, we encourage HIV/AIDS workplace policies for both the public and the private sectors, and we obtain support from the private sector. The Business Coalition against HIV/AIDS has been established to assist contributors who are workers, on the impact of HIV/AIDS in the world of work.

The issue of gender equality is also applauded as it paves the way, in development and decision-making processes, for a fair and just world. My Government supports you all on this issue and is committed to this cause.

I am proud to inform the Conference that more and more women now stand a chance to compete with men as equal partners in all aspects of work. My Government has taken major steps to adopt the best practices that are aimed at making the lives of Papua New Guineans better.

The significance of decent work as an agenda for change, and the idea of tripartism as a vehicle for a fair and balanced contribution to national development, are picking up momentum and have been labelled as mainstays for the future of the nation.

The soon-to-be endorsed National Decent Work Policy by the National Executive Council, the legislative reforms, the tripartite formulation and development of the National Decent Work Country Programme, and the tripartite commitment to imple-

ment these programmes over a four-year period are a testimony to our efforts in making Papua New Guinea a better place to live. The human face of the Decent Work Agenda is applauded by the Government, and we believe it can blend in well with the economic and social aspirations of my country.

My Government has pledged to find a balance, and we are working closely with all concerned parties, including our social partners, to achieve that aim.

Finally, I wish to express my Government's commitment and the commitment of the people of Papua New Guinea to make decent work central to our Government's functions and to industries' objectives, as well as the workers' answer to a fairer and just work environment. The strong and vibrant tripartite spirit in our country gives added incentive to address decent work deficits in all sectors of the economy.

The Government of Papua New Guinea has and always will welcome the work of the ILO in the country. The commitment of our resources and our efforts to achieve decent and productive work for the benefit of our people remains one of the key targets of the Government. The ILO will soon be advised of the National Executive Council's decision on ratification of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, in respect of the ILO in our country, an important international commitment that our Government has supported for the benefit of the ILO, at the national level.

Be assured that we are committed to the changes in the ILO field structure for a greater effectiveness of its programmes and activities in our country. The partnership and good working spirit that the ILO has always enjoyed with Papua New Guinea continues to strengthen and improve as we embark on the road to finding the balance for fair growth and, as a member of the global community and a member State of the ILO, Papua New Guinea is committed to the outcome of this Conference.

Original French : Mr DIALLO (Minister of Labour, Administrative Reform and Civil Service, Guinea)

The Republic of Guinea is deeply convinced that the solution to the current economic and financial crisis requires the active involvement of the ILO. It has to help us find appropriate ways and means to limit its breadth, social effect and serious consequences, particularly on employment in the private sector, which creates the most jobs.

We are faced with a crucial issue that undermines that very basis of the development of all countries.

A reform of the international monetary system to give it regulations that are less *laissez faire* is what we need so that we can deal with the root causes and the most harmful effects of the current crisis.

My delegation fully supports the recommendations contained in the Director-General's Report and we would invite ILO constituents to implement them.

Guinea has ratified the eight fundamental Conventions of the ILO. We have always been against all forms of forced labour and in favour of the promotion of human rights. In this regard, the Government has implemented a voluntary policy to combat forced labour by helping vulnerable groups; including women, young people both in and out of education and people with disabilities.

In terms of equality between men and women, the need to promote social justice as the basis of decent work requires the strengthening and broadening of measures aimed at the effective implementation of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which is a reference framework for achieving decent work and combating poverty.

With regard to the occupied Arab territories, my delegation unreservedly condemns the repressive practices of the Israeli occupation forces against the Arab population of Palestine.

It fully shares the conclusions of the Report of the Director-General on the need for a real commitment by the international community not only for a fair, lasting and overall peace, which would bring an end to the occupation, but also for the creation of a viable Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside Israel.

Clearly, like other member States, we were happy to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the ILO in April, and we did this with the active involvement of the Subregional Office for West Africa, based in Dakar, as well as political authorities and national employers' and workers' organizations.

The events showed the major importance of the diligent treatment of social dialogue issues, the establishment of social peace, the implementation of employment policies, social protection, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and dynamic remuneration policies, etc.

I would like to express once again the gratitude of the people and Government of Guinea to the Director-General of the International Labour Office, and to his entire staff, for the support that the Office has given my country during the political transition that began on 23 December 2008.

The National Council for Democracy and Development and the Government are determined to drive this peaceful transition forward. The Government has made public an ambitious, multifaceted programme of action to improve the working and living conditions of our population and we ask once again for the international community to give its support and assist us further in our commitment to fight the chronic misadministration and other aspects that have long prevented the harmonious development of Guinea.

To finish, I would like to confirm that my country is absolutely determined to make a contribution to the values of this Organization, through respecting our constitutional commitments, and promoting fundamental labour rights, social justice and equality for all.

Ms SUFIAN (*State Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh*)

As a labour leader, I feel a special attachment to the ILO. I salute the ILO for being the custodian of labour rights for the last 90 years. We hope that this Organization will continue to grow from strength to strength. We hope that the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference will fulfil its objectives under strong and pragmatic leadership. I assure you of our full support.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his comprehensive Report. We appreciate his earnest efforts in addressing the challenges before us. Employment and decent work are key to a sustainable recovery process. Job creation, sustainable enterprises and social protection are now the subject of national and international policy debates.

There is no easy solution to the crisis. The reform of the global financial system must be extensive in order to correct the existing imbalances. The responses to the crisis should be comprehensive and coordinated. The responses to the crisis should look far beyond the crisis, otherwise the outcome of this Conference will soon be of no use.

The Report of the Director-General underscores all this and more. We must try to reach a balanced outcome that is relevant to our constituents as well as those outside our Organization. In this spirit, I would like to flag the following issues of interest to my Government.

Our decent work response to the crisis should be people-centred and development-oriented. Efforts should be given to promote green jobs to offset the impact of climate change on the world of work. Migrant workers must be assured of their rights and protection. Both sending and receiving countries should work together to mitigate the job-loss impact on both returning and potential migrants.

We have certain expectations of the ILO in relation to our national response to those challenges and I would like to mention some of them. The ILO should provide technical assistance to develop a national skills development policy that will help sustainable job creation, both nationally and internationally. The ILO should help assess the feasibility of implementing a basic social protection package, mainly targeting the weak and unemployed. It should explore innovative ways to provide informal workers with some social security coverage. It should help promote viability of enterprises through greater capacity-building support.

I would like to conclude by giving a broad overview of our national labour and employment policies. Our Government believes that employment generation is a precondition for sound economic growth. Under the leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Government is keen on taking all the necessary steps to enhance the quality of workers' lives, removing wage discrimination between male and female workers.

The Government is presently examining further reform proposals to the labour law. We are at the final stage of formulating the Workers' Welfare Foundation Act. We have also achieved considerable success in eliminating child labour. We are moving ahead with formulating a comprehensive policy on the elimination of child labour. As part of our election mandate, my Government is committed to ensuring at least one job per family. We look forward to achieving this in a progressive manner.

Resource constraints often limit our ability to widen the scope of our activities. We hope that we shall be able to overcome these difficulties and offer a decent life to our people with the support and assistance of the international community.

Ms PONCINI (*Representative, International Federation of University Women*)

This is a joint statement by the following members of the CONGO Committee on the Status of Women and its Working Group on Women's Employment and Economics of Gender: International Federation of University Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women, Worldwide Organization of Women, Pan-Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association, Zonta International, Women's International

League for Peace and Freedom, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Women's Federation for World Peace International, World Women's Summit Foundation, Solar Cookers International, African Commission on Health Promoters and Human Rights, International Council of Jewish Women and Femmes Africa Solidarité.

We congratulate the Director-General and his staff for the ILO Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*. We particularly welcome paragraph 15 on the Global Jobs Pact which addresses the immediate needs of formal and informal economy workers, families and enterprises, while laying the foundations for a fair globalization sustained by a socially, environmentally and economically balanced pattern of growth.

We regret, however, that this Report has not mainstreamed a gender perspective. For example, while it states that great job losses are in manufacturing and export industries and inflates the number of informal workers; that temporary workers and those without contracts are first to suffer the crisis; and that poverty has been exacerbated by the crisis, the Report does not specify the female-to-male ratio. Nor does it indicate the proportion of women to men who lose their jobs but do not get unemployment benefits and social protection.

Whereas gender equality was a focus in the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, this Report makes no mention of proactive legal and policy measures and development assistance that would redress gender inequalities in tackling job losses. For example, how young women could have equal access to non-traditional training opportunities.

We propose that gender auditing and budgeting would ensure that the productive and reproductive work of women of all ages get their equitable share of economic growth, and not merely as social expenditures. What is clearly needed is data specifically disaggregated by sex and age for every reporting, monitoring, assessment and evaluation process.

This being said, we express great satisfaction and thanks to the ILO Governing Body for placing "Gender equality at the heart of decent work" on the agenda (item VI), but regret that discussions had to be reduced by two days to accommodate an urgent summit on the global jobs crisis.

The Report is particularly welcome for it addresses the whole gamut of direct and indirect discrimination and asymmetric power relations that are the root causes of decent work deficits accumulated over a life course.

It proves the argument that gender equality perspectives should be institutionalized as a stand-alone and regular item of the ILO and the Conference with its own adequate budget resource and programme of work if one is to succeed in achieving full de facto equality.

Moreover, gender mainstreaming should be a strategic objective and systematic process in all the work of the ILO. This would ensure no backsliding of equal rights and empowerment of women in favour of men's decent work in crisis periods, or vice versa. Today's global financial and economic crisis is a clear example that women's decent work and reproductive rights are being downscaled.

It is also essential that women of all ages, over their lifetime, be specifically targeted. For centuries,

the patriarchal society has shackled women to household chores and only released them to the labour market recently, in particular as buffers to economic and social crises and armed conflicts.

While rights of women have made good progress in legislation, in practice, women still bear the greatest burden of disguised and triangular employment relationships. Many root causes of gender discrimination lie outside the labour market and embedded in social perceptions and social norms which affect women's decent work.

We consider it critical that, newly introduced equality laws and social security schemes should take account of all the invisible activities of unpaid work that contribute to the sustainability of enterprises and to sustainable development in general.

Finally, a great challenge is the quality of de jure rights of women. These rights have not improved the standard of life of women who continue to bear the double burden of work and family life, although the concept of sharing work and family responsibilities between men and women has made inroads in certain countries.

Decent work for women continues to slip between the cracks because of gender segmentation by occupation and different values attached to women's jobs in comparison to men's jobs, hence are characterized by wage differences and discrimination based on gender.

We urge governments, social partners and non-governmental organizations to utilize international standards, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW) and the ILO's gender equality Conventions in an effort to provide decent work and decent career opportunities to women, including, where necessary, affirmative action in governmental organisations in order for women to reach political and economic policy and decision-making positions.

We ask to open up space for social dialogue with women through the setting up of women's sections within trade unions and employers' organizations, supporting civil society and NGO women's networking, and exercising pressure on the male-dominated decision makers who continue to dominate organizational structures of collective negotiations.

Original Portuguese: Ms GOULART (Worker, Brazil)

This Conference is taking place at a time when the world economy is facing the most serious crisis that it has seen since 1929. It started in the United States then spread rapidly throughout the rest of the world, devastating the financial system and stock markets, with drastic repercussions for world trade, industrial production and employment.

The social consequences of the financial crisis can be measured in terms of the millions of workers throughout the world who have lost their jobs because of the economic downturn, the reduction of credit and business activity and the bankruptcy of large financial and industrial companies, which have led to an increase in precarious jobs and informal employment and aggravated social inequalities.

This is the direct consequence of the predominance of speculative capital over production and of a financial system that was simply unregulated. It also shows the bankruptcy of all the neo-liberalist political theories, dashing the myth that the market

knew how to regulate itself and was best at distributing society's economic resources.

Privatization, deregulated markets, taking the State out of the economy, privileging speculative capital, the loosening of rules on labour and making jobs less secure, were all part of the "minimal state" approach. They have been shown to be just tools for concentrating wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people and centralizing capital.

A political and economic elite over the past 30 years has imposed the "minimal state" approach. And now they are turning to the State, and asking it to bail them out and place the burden on society as a whole. Trillions of dollars of public money have been used to shore up central banks and international financial institutions, to create liquidity and prevent banks from going bankrupt, and save the international financial system.

Although the neo-liberal programme is clearly bankrupt itself, it is claimed that the crisis is just the result of isolated cases linked to the subprime crisis in the United States. This seeks to avoid a deeper discussion on the characteristics of the systemic crisis, as to why the model at this point has come undone. We need, at this point in time, to develop better social and democratic control over economic activity. We need more economic intervention by governments.

Brazil's workers call for a democratic alternative to the current method of dealing with this crisis. The neo-liberal model has failed. Now we have to decide what we are going to do in the short term. We want to find a democratic alternative to deal with the crisis, and a way of making the economy strong again, to the benefit of the majority of workers. We want to define an agenda which will tie in with the social rights of workers, based on decent work with decent wages and sustainable development. All of which is reflected in the Declaration on Social Justice for Fair Globalization of 2008.

So, it is very important that we bring together all of our efforts at the labour union level, the democratic and progressive political level, and the national government level: in defence of a new economic and social order, with genuine democratic reforms in the international financial institutions aimed at building a new financial architecture, a new economy, aimed at regulating capital flows and speculation, promoting sustainable development, social inclusion and combating misery, poverty and hunger. In this process, it is very important to improve union representation, strengthen collective bargaining, defend jobs, and extend the economic and social rights of workers, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, for example, women, the young and the retired.

There is much still that can be done to try to turn this fight into a true social dialogue for decent work, for sustainable development, and turn this into actual public policies to make these rights a reality, promoting decent work and decent wages for all, ensuring that the rights of workers are respected, that new social protection mechanisms are applied, and the ILO instruments noted in box 14 of the Director-General's Report, are effectively promoted.

In Brazil we want to try and promote the Decent Work Agenda as part of an overarching national campaign. It should be decentralized and extended to the federal States and to the local authorities, to the unions, union federations and confederations. We think that this is the time when we need to make

real progress, and we need to raise levels of protection for workers in our country, reducing the existing inequalities between gender, race and ethnic groups.

In the last five years, Brazil enjoyed the most sustained economic growth of the last 30, with a positive impact on the generation of jobs and the increase in average wages and net incomes of workers. The world crisis has interrupted this process.

The unions have expressed their support in fighting this crisis in a plan put to President Lula. They have offered their support, but they want on the other hand a social "trade off" in the form of job safeguards in companies and sectors that have benefited from public money in the form of tax incentives, improved unemployment insurance, and the adoption of the minimum wages policy law and ratification of Conventions Nos 151 and 158.

Now it is the responsibility of everyone to strengthen the role of the social partners as part of the tripartite system to try to combat the effects of the world jobs crisis with a focus on decent work, by adopting at this 98th Session of International Labour Conference the Global Jobs Pact. This will ensure public social policies that will minimize the effects of the crisis on workers and promote a new model of economic growth which will be innovative so that we can actually achieve a just, integrated and sustainable globalization.

Mr NGONGONDO (*Government, Malawi*)

I take this opportunity to congratulate the ILO on the commemoration of the tenth anniversary since the adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182), which Malawi was the second country to ratify.

My delegation is pleased to note that the Conference has this year focused its attention, among other issues, on addressing the global financial crisis that has affected both developing and developed countries. In this regard, we commend the Director-General for the Report to the Conference that has provided useful insights into the work before us of tackling the global job crisis recovery through decent work policies.

The global financial crisis has affected job situations in different countries to varying degrees, so the difficulty of achieving a common approach to the serious challenges facing different parts of the world should not be underestimated. It is, therefore, imperative that all countries, including developing and emerging ones, should be able to participate in recovery measures according to their needs and policy requirements.

In Malawi, we face numerous employment challenges, especially among the youth and people living in rural areas as a result of the global financial crisis that has impacted on our economy at both macro and micro levels. As a least developed country whose economy is dependent on the export of primary commodities, Malawi is susceptible to the effects of international financial flows and requires specific job stimulus packages.

As one of the national responses, the Government of Malawi has undertaken a number of initiatives to stimulate the economy and create more jobs. These include the adoption of appropriate economic policy measures aimed at stabilizing the macroeconomic fundamentals in order to create a conducive economic environment that would attract local and foreign investment.

For the past four years, the economy responded positively. For example, in the 2007–08 fiscal year, the economy registered a growth rate of 9.7 per cent, while in 2008–09 the projection is 8.5 per cent, a drop which is partly explained by the effects of the global financial crisis. Nevertheless, as a country we expect increased levels of investment and employment from this positive economic trend.

Furthermore, to stimulate employment in the rural areas, the Government has established the Malawi Rural Development Fund (MARDEF) and the One Village One Product Programme (OVOP). In addition, in the fiscal year 2009–10, the Government will set up a K3 billion Youth Development Fund with a view to creating employment for youth, through the promotion of small-scale businesses.

Another challenge facing workers in Malawi and affecting their productivity is the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In 2007, the Governing Body of the ILO decided to place on the agenda of the International Labour Conference in 2009 and 2010 an item intended for the development of an autonomous Recommendation on HIV/AIDS in the world of work, on the basis of a double discussion.

Malawi recognizes the importance of tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic in order to have a more productive workforce that is able to contribute to national development. To this end, a number of policy measures have been undertaken at national level. These include the establishment of the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS in the President's Office to provide policy direction and oversight on the national response to HIV/AIDS.

In addition, the National AIDS Commission was set up as a Government agent coordinating programme implementation and as a rallying point for all donor and development partner support. Our challenge, therefore, is to make these structures function effectively in practice.

Let me end by stressing that, although the Government has made significant strides to stimulate the economy and thereby create more jobs, there are still a number of challenges that need to be addressed. In this regard, we acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the technical and financial assistance that Malawi is receiving from the ILO towards the implementation of various programmes, including development of the Decent Work Country Programme and implementation of the two HIV/AIDS projects, namely the HIV/AIDS Workplace Programme and the HIV/AIDS Impact Mitigation in the Transport Sector.

However, owing to the severity of the global financial crisis which threatens to wipe out the gains that Malawi has achieved in the recent past, my delegation is, therefore, seeking more technical and financial assistance from the ILO and other cooperation partners. We believe that such assistance would go a long way to stimulating the economy and creating more jobs in the country.

Original Arabic: Mr DJEMEM (Representative, International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions)

We would like to thank the Director-General, Mr Somavia, for his Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and also for examining the issue of forced labour, which still exists in more than 35 countries. Nothing has been done to stop this form of slavery, particularly in the backdrop of neoliberalism, globalization and the international finan-

cial crisis, with its accompanying increase in unemployment.

Last year, our union spoke here about an Arab trade union campaign to promote all the union rights and freedoms of Arab workers. This year, I am delighted to be able to praise the progress made in this area in Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. I commend the measures taken in this area following our recent visit when we became aware of the situation and made contact with the workers' organizations of these Arab countries.

We have looked at the Director-General's Report concerning the situation of Arab workers in Palestine and in the other occupied Arab territories. The report addresses certain realities which prove without a doubt that Israel continues to ignore United Nations resolutions by continuing its occupation of Palestine, the Syrian Golan, the Shebaa Farms and Kfarchouba in Lebanon. The Report referred to the aggressive attitude adopted by Israel, which continues to kill and massacre the Palestinian people and to confine them in Gaza and other areas of occupied Palestine. They have built a racist wall and confiscated Palestinian land.

The Report refers to Israel as an occupying country that flouts international law. Native inhabitants have become foreigners on their own land. We are asking the international community to help the workers and people of Palestine to create an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as the capital.

We also ask for a withdrawal of the occupying forces from Iraq and for the country's sovereignty and unity to be saved.

We ask for the three islands to be returned to Arab sovereignty. We also ask the new American Government to cooperate with the Government of Sudan to solve the problem in Darfur.

We strongly condemn the decision of the International Criminal Court concerning the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. We feel that there is no justice in this world. Quite the contrary. While the Israeli criminals are left unpunished for their actions in Palestine, as are the Americans for what they have done in Iraq, the innocent people are the ones being penalized.

This is the crime of our era.

Original Russian: Mr POTAPOV (Representative, General Confederation of Trade Unions)

I am speaking on behalf of Mr Shcherbakov who was unable to come to Geneva for reasons beyond his control.

This session of the Conference is taking place in the year of the ILO's 90th anniversary. In that connection I would like, on behalf of the workers and trade unions of the Commonwealth of Independent States, to congratulate the ILO on this significant date and wish them full success in its future work.

The ILO's contribution to endorsing the principles of social fairness in the domain of work and social policy really cannot be overestimated. The ILO was the first to speak out in favour of fair globalization, and developed a campaign for achieving it, which had the fraternal support of all the world's trade unions. The Decent Work Agenda and the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization could with justice be called the Organization's "visiting cards".

We believe it is only right that, in this session, which is taking place at a time of global financial

and economic crisis, the Director-General of the ILO has focused his Report on issues of employment and social protection in conditions of global recession. Unless you solve these key problems, you can have no hope for success of any other anti-crisis measures. Maintaining the highest possible level of employment in the present crisis is the main concern for the trade unions of the CIS.

The Director-General's Report gives us a deep and true to life picture of the present jobs crisis and possible ways of getting out of it. However, we do not think it devotes sufficient attention to the particular problems of our region.

We agree with the Director-General that the causes of the crisis lie in the breakdown of the present system of globalization, transnational "casino" capitalism based on the headlong race for profit combined with scorn for the social needs of people, and absurd faith in the omnipotence of market forces. We need instead a model for the global economy that combines the interests of all national economies and is based on social justice and effective, democratic and responsible governance. Implementation of the Decent Work Agenda at every level is a precondition for this.

Of particular significance is the Report's proposal for a Global Jobs Pact as one of the main anti-crisis tools. The General Confederation of Trade Unions supports this initiative and is ready to make its contribution to achieving it. Success with this would be a real breakthrough in international efforts to solve the problem of employment. And that is the crucial step in overcoming the crisis. We also endorse the role that is given in the Report to the social partners, and thus to the trade unions, in resolving questions relating to the Global Jobs Pact.

Our Confederation endorses the position of the international trade union movement set out in the Washington and London Declarations. We believe workers should not bear the burden of the consequences of the crisis. We must not allow tried and tested principles and mechanisms of social partnership to be undermined on the pretext of real or imagined difficulties, nor should we permit the violation of collective agreements, failure to implement social programmes, non-payment of wages and benefits, or the marginalization of trade unions.

Our position and proposals on the anti-crisis measures are set out in our *Declaration regarding the social and economic situation in the CIS States and the actions of the trade unions in conditions of global financial crisis*, which was adopted in April this year.

In conclusion, we would like to endorse the conclusion of the ILO's Eighth European Regional Meeting that the ILO should play a leading part in global efforts to help humanity out of the present social and economic crisis without damaging the interests of the workers. In this it can rely on the support of the trade unions of the CIS countries.

Original French: Mr MOBIO (Representative, Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations)

It is a great honour for me to take the floor before this august assembly on the occasion of the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference, on behalf of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), which represents over 50,000 officials in the United Nations common system and several other international organizations.

I am myself an official at the World Health Organization but today I am speaking on behalf of the members of FICSA, who wish the ILO every success in its work and would like to congratulate it on its 90th anniversary. We are talking about an organization that goes back almost 100 years and one that has made a substantial contribution to improving labour relations, safety and health at work, labour law, the reduction in working time, the regulation of arduous work, and has also made achievements in many other areas of which the world of work is proud.

All workers today are still reaping the benefits of the achievements resulting from previous struggles which were sometimes hard-fought with the decision-makers and employers and I would like to give you some examples of these – the right of association and the right to collective bargaining, as contained in Conventions Nos 87 and 98. There are many more achievements.

However, it must be recognized that there is still a lot to be done, as is clear from the various items on the agenda for this 98th Session of the International Labour Conference, which you have been called upon to examine, such as the right to decent work, gender equality and, let us not forget, the implications of the global financial crisis and its impact on labour relations, employment and social protection.

The United Nations common system has a particular feature, namely that all the achievements from previous struggles are only applied in the United Nations common system organizations in part, if at all.

With regard to collective bargaining, for all trade unions and associations of international officials, it is only the ILO union which benefits in principle from collective bargaining in its relations with the ILO administration.

However, it should be remembered that our employment conditions are not decided in our respective organizations, but rather by the United Nations General Assembly, on the recommendation of the International Civil Service Commission, where just uttering the term "collective bargaining" has become taboo. We are consulted only on the determination of our employment conditions.

With regard to the right of association, even if it is enshrined in principle in the staff regulations and rules, we must point out that enormous difficulties are still encountered in several international organizations when it comes to its effective application.

My statement today has as its sole aim to illustrate to you that the achievements and trade union rights, which all workers throughout the world have a right to benefit from, are not applied to international officials.

International officials are workers in their own right and therefore they should also benefit from the protection and from trade union rights that are enshrined in the texts adopted by the ILO.

In this vein, we would like to request this august assembly that they ensure that international officials also be able to negotiate their employment conditions like all other workers around the world, whether they are working as civil servants or in the private sector.

The other point that FICSA would like to raise with this assembly concerns the good administration of justice in the ILO Administrative Tribunal. The United Nations General Assembly has recently adopted new provisions for setting up a new admini-

nistrative tribunal, which will be effective from 1 July 2009. Even if this new instrument is not perfect, because there is still a lot to be done, it is a first step towards having an independent justice system within the United Nations.

The International Labour Conference and the ILO Governing Body, having founded the ILO Administrative Tribunal, are the only bodies mandated to rule on any amendments to the rules and regulations for this Tribunal.

For many years now, FICSA and other bodies representing staff, including the ILO staff union, have requested that their legal status be recognized. Unfortunately, the last revision of ILO Administrative Tribunal rules did not yield the desired results and only recognized out-of-court settlements.

Given the increase in cases of moral and sexual harassment, discrimination, precarious contracts and, given the fear of reprisal, international officials who are victims of such acts and behaviour do not dare to attack their organizations or hierarchical superiors in these bodies dealing with such cases.

It is important that the bodies representing the staff have legal status in order to be able to represent and defend the rights and interests of their members.

FICSA believes that this august assembly has the power to ask for a review of the rules and regulations for the ILO Administrative Tribunal and also to ask that all parties concerned be invited to participate in any review mechanism looking at the functioning of this Tribunal. And, also, we ask that finally the bodies representing international officials also be given legal status so that the ILO rules and principles do not stop at the doors of intergovernmental organizations.

Finally, let us practice what we preach. I would like to thank the ILO for having given me this opportunity to speak here. However, I regret that I must speak here in a room that is almost empty. We understand that your agendas are very busy, but we certainly hope that next year things will be planned so that there will be many delegates in the room, because our message that we want to pass on to the Conference is a very important one.

Mr PANDEY (*Employer, Nepal*)

For me, this Conference is a very important forum, not only because it is a tripartite forum, but also because it comes at a critical moment globally when millions of jobs are at stake as a result of the financial crisis. The financial crisis has adversely affected the socio-economic development process and employment worldwide. This point was raised in the Report of the Director General, which we duly acknowledge. To address this issue it is important to make substantial changes to our policies and strategies. This is a common problem of employers, workers and the governments and we therefore all need to understand the situation and work together closely.

The market-led economy and globalization have brought opportunities as well as challenges. This has created a new regime of employment practices, which are necessary to be competitive and remain in the global market. Employers need tacit support from the ILO in handling the interconnected issues of globalization and promoting labour standards in the world of work. It is high time that the ILO addressed the problems emerging in the labour markets that have hindered the process of economic

growth, while also improving the quality of work life.

The employers of Nepal are concerned with developing more enterprises and creating more jobs and wealth with the objective of reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. All the labour-related issues taken up by the ILO need to be strengthened in line with the above objectives. The economic and social impact of labour standards needs special focus, especially in a developing country like Nepal. Some of the new issues that are being taken up by the ILO, such as the extension of social security to the informal economy, need pragmatic solutions.

Nepal's development strategy focuses primarily on the increasing role of the private sector for economic growth and employment generation. However, the business environment has not fostered the growth expected and the private sector has been facing difficulties in increasing economic growth. A recent survey conducted jointly by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Department for International Development (DFID), the ILO and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has identified frequent labour unrest, the power deficit and political instability as some of the major constraints on inclusive growth.

You are all aware of the political situation in Nepal, which is going through a phase of transition. At this juncture, we are facing the challenge of creating more job opportunities, while also sustaining existing employment. Nevertheless, there have been efforts to address the socio-economic issues despite the adverse business environment. During this turbulent time, Nepalese industries have been facing problems at many levels. The limited energy supply has been a major hindrance to improving industry, while the ongoing political instability and related problems have equally hampered the day-to-day running and growth of enterprises.

Our Government delegates have already shed light on the progress we have made. At present, our primary concern is to sustain the existing employment and create a conducive environment for establishing industrial peace and employment generation for the sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

The employers of Nepal have been making efforts to promote industrial harmony and have emphasized promoting social dialogue. There is a need for legislative reforms and we have working towards those reforms. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a serious problem in Nepal. Currently we are actively involved with the Government of Nepal in the implementation of a youth self-employment programme.

I believe that it is very important for the Conference to draft a resolution to address the issues discussed by the delegates. Many of our concerns may be different, given our own countries' specific situations, but there are some common issues that we all are facing. We need to reach a consensus on addressing those issues.

I strongly urge the ILO to address those issues, taking account of the realities on the ground in order to ensure methods are adopted to improve the quality of life of working people, as well as the sustainable growth of businesses.

The ILO should provide more specific assistance to its constituents for the implementation of activities to achieve the desired goals. We must remember that the ILO can only be as strong as its consti-

tments. If we want to see a stronger ILO in the international community we first need to make our constituents stronger.

This year we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the ILO and I would like to congratulate every one of us on this auspicious occasion. We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go to achieve our goal of decent work for all. For this, we need to stand united and move forward, drawing our strengths from what we have achieved so far.

Mr HILMAN (*Employer, Indonesia*)

The message contained in the Report of the Director-General is timely, significant and relevant to the global situation. Indeed, it contains several key points that should be seriously considered by business communities in Indonesia. The impact of the world financial crisis and increasing unemployment among the workforce will unavoidably create another burden in our efforts to reach common goals in decent work programmes.

In terms of socio-economic concerns, unemployment is the basic problem for developing countries. Within the global financial crisis, the workforce tends to be cornered into a situation where they do not have choices for their life. In this regard, we are convinced that we must continue our struggle to prevent unemployment from increasing. Therefore, we should not weaken our resolve to deal with those issues together, hand in hand with all stakeholders dealing with those issues.

In addition, I also believe that we can use the opportunity of this Conference to develop, together, coherent and concrete programmes. We must be forward looking in order to go further with job creation and increase the employment rate.

We, the business communities in Indonesia, believe that, to deal with the crisis, boosting economic growth through investment can, and still is, the main driver of recovery. There is no doubt that investment brings and creates more job opportunities. For that reason, in our view, new investment, particularly foreign investment, will surely assist our efforts to fulfil our socio-economic responsibilities for the needs of the people.

Allow me, at this juncture, to appeal to this distinguished forum, and more specifically to all countries and potential foreign investors, to consider the merit of investing their capital in Indonesia. I can assure you that your investments in my country will contribute to the liberalizing of the Indonesian labour markets and, more importantly, will be part of our concrete efforts in eliminating unemployment in developing countries like Indonesia.

In that context, it is always my organization's commitment to play our role as a reliable partner for such investment. Indeed, experience teaches us that stronger enterprises, with stronger investment, are key to achieving common goals in the economic fields, as well as representing a strategic way to reach prosperity and wealth in most developing countries.

Let me now briefly touch on the tripartite practices conducted in Indonesia. Business communities will maintain their commitment to build a better and harmonious environment among all stakeholders. We believe that this harmonious environment, involving employers and employees in mutually beneficial relations, is vital. In its capacity, the Employers' Association of Indonesia (APINDO) has worked hard, hand in hand with trade unions, to

promote and maintain such relationships at every level, including industry and agriculture throughout the country.

In this regard, allow me to express our appreciation to the Government for their support. We also reiterate our conviction that our harmonious relations, in which APINDO, the Government and workers stand together, supported by the ILO office in Indonesia (ILO-Jakarta), will continue to work in this right direction.

In conclusion, my organization believes that tripartite mechanisms are crucial for the democratic conduct of industrial relations. I hope that such relations can constantly contribute to our ability to solve any labour question for our common objectives.

Finally, let me complete my intervention by saying that APINDO is firmly committed to our efforts to create and maintain harmonious industrial relations in Indonesia.

Original Arabic: Mr AL-DARRAJI (Worker, Iraq)

At times of increased determination by global imperialism to try and seize the goods of the people, lead them into poverty and hunger and impose policies whose only results are excessive increases in the prices of basic food products, it means a very real humanitarian crisis. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, confirmed in its latest statistics that more than a billion of the world's people suffer from famine, and that this number is increasing, especially since the world economic crisis continues to affect all peoples of the world, in particular the workers who lose their jobs and the thousands of people now out of work who are swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

Workers throughout the world are looking to this Conference to find effective solutions that will guarantee their survival and that of their families. Among these workers are the workers of Iraq, who hope to receive an important amount of your attention concerning the disastrous situation in which they find themselves as a result of the occupation of their country and the ensuing consequences. We have seen the industrial, social, cultural and service infrastructure destroyed, in addition to increases in unemployment and precarious and non-decent jobs and child labour. Iraq has never experienced such a catastrophic situation.

The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions is very strongly attached to its legitimacy and its role in promoting economic, social and political life and the reconstruction of the state of law. We have decided to challenge the privatization of Iraq's oil resources, education, health system and other services. We support all the real efforts that are being deployed to reconstruct the basic infrastructures and create jobs in order to tackle rising unemployment. Such efforts benefit from the help of the International Labour Organization, the Arab Labour Organisation and the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, as well as Arab and international trade unions. The workers of Iraq and their trade union movement call on you to influence the Government of Iraq to recall the Council of Ministers' order No. 8750, which was promulgated in 2005. This ordered the freezing of the goods and assets of the Iraqi Workers' Federation.

Our Arab region has seen serious events whose consequences will be disastrous, not only for our region, but also for international peace and security.

We see continued attacks by the racist Zionists on the Arab people of Palestine and their daily massacre and forced exile of this people, not forgetting the recent violations, destruction and economic embargo in the Gaza Strip. These policies are simply beyond the bounds of reason, in particular following the arrival of the extreme right to power in Israel and its provocative declarations, which can only distance us from the desired peace. Among its declarations, Israel has said that it wants to maintain its occupation of the Golan Heights and keep Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Zionist State. It continues to threaten to occupy southern Lebanon and attack Syria and Iran. This is all immoral and has only aggravated the Arab-Zionist conflict and undermined all international efforts aimed at creating peace in the region.

Finally, we would like to state our respect and esteem for the efforts of the International Labour Organization to establish social justice standards. We want to thank also the Arab Labour Organisation and also the International Federation of Arab Trade Unions, as well as the international and Arab federations and organizations and trade unions that have supported and continue to support Iraqi workers and the Iraqi people.

Original Arabic: Mr KABAHA (Worker, Palestine)

It is my pleasure to extend to you the greetings of the Palestinian workers and of the Palestinian people. They ask you to give them greater support because they have a hard life that no human being can endure. They are suffering from the injustice and the terrorism of the Israeli occupation authorities.

The Palestinian workers are being persecuted on a daily basis by the Israeli soldiers; they are arrested, imprisoned or beaten; and they are tortured and humiliated. They have to look for work every day. They say goodbye to their families because they are never sure that they will return safe and sound. They work hard with the sweat of their brow. Unemployment and poverty are rife among the population because the Israeli occupation has set up a military blockade and prevents them from going anywhere. The occupation forces have set up hundreds of roadblocks. They practice the worst forms of racial discrimination; they confiscate land; they build settlements; they destroy houses; they evict people from their homes; they destroy mosques and churches; they work towards making Al-Quds Jewish; and they are building a separation wall. And all these actions are carried out with armed force.

The Palestinian workers thank the Director-General profusely for sending a high-level mission to Palestine. The members of that mission were able to see with their own eyes the Israeli racist practices against the workers and people of Palestine. We thank the ILO for its efforts, but we believe that the ILO should denounce the position of Israel which continues to infringe international resolutions and refuses to establish peace. We call upon the Organization to express greater solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The Director-General's Report describes the plight of Palestinian workers as a true humanitarian disaster, contrary to the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Israel is violating the trade union, human, social and economic rights of the workers and people of Palestine. We can no longer count the number of pris-

ners in Israeli prisons, a majority of whom are Palestinian workers.

The military aggression and war against Gaza has destroyed the infrastructure, particularly schools and hospitals, as well as thousands of homes. The headquarters of the General Federation of Trade Unions of Palestine was also not spared. Thousands of women, children and the elderly have been forced to leave because they no longer have homes. We have been deprived of electricity and water. Our country has been divided up into pieces and communications have been severed. The Israelis used weapons that have been internationally banned against Gaza, encircling it and imposing a blockade. They have practised ethnic cleansing against the workers and people of Palestine.

This daily terrorism perpetrated by Israel requires international solidarity to force the extreme right government to withdraw its forces from the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Arab territories, to eradicate the settlements, to prevent the settlers from destroying the property of Palestinians, and to give the right of return to Palestinians under United Nations resolution 194.

We call on our Organization to speak out against the reality of terrorism and racism in Israel. There can be no lasting and global peace without the creation of a Palestinian State, with its capital as Al-Quds, and the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from Golan and Southern Lebanon.

Original Arabic: Mr AHMED ABDELAZIZ GHANDOUR (Worker, Sudan)

On behalf of the General Union of Sudanese Workers, I wish our Conference every success and hope that it will adopt resolutions and Recommendations that will meet the aspirations of workers, employers and governments, and fulfil the hopes of peoples for sound policies to lead them out of the current crises.

This Conference is being held at a time when all the peoples of the world are facing dire straits – the effects of the severe economic crisis that has spared no country – rich or poor, workers, employers and giant corporations. The Director-General was quite right in choosing the crisis as the theme of his Report to this session, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*.

The Organization's serious efforts to find a way out of the crisis through a Global Jobs Pact and other resolutions and recommendations will enable it to develop a road map for its member States, and lead the way for other international organizations and actors of the global economy in order to deal wisely and judiciously with the problems we are facing, and to learn from the failures of the past, in order to work towards a better future, one of stability and well-being, which has always been the dream of every society.

The Governing Body was quite right to include the global economic crisis in the agenda of the Conference this year and to set up a Committee of the Whole on the subject, comprised of experts and specialists, and in which the social partners expressed their true concerns and formulated the essence of their ideas and experience. We hope that the work of the Committee will yield a solution enabling us to overcome this crisis.

You will recall that at this time last year we were talking about the global food crisis and how to overcome it, and hardly a year has passed but we

are faced with a new crisis, the economic crisis, the repercussions of which are becoming apparent day by day, as it affects all the peoples of the world, be it in the North or the South.

The lessons learned from the food crisis, and from the current economic crisis, have convinced us that partial solutions, and the blind pursuit of an unbridled globalization that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer, will only lead to destruction and threaten security and social peace. However, this can be avoided thanks to the pioneering efforts of our Organization, which has followed the motto “poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere”.

Firstly, we must turn our backs on the theory of unbridled capitalism, which has failed, encouraged financial and real estate speculation, hindered food production and prevented growth and equity.

Secondly, we need to adopt a new economic theory centred on human beings, with production and development as its motto, equality among human beings as its goal, and solidarity, social justice and prosperity as its ultimate aim.

Thirdly, as the Director-General has pointed out, we need to establish a Global Jobs Pact as the way to kick-start production and create jobs for youth, which is on the brink of frustration and despair, and thus to preserve security and social stability.

The Director-General’s Report on the situation of Arab workers of the occupied Arab territories sheds light on a real human tragedy, and a crying shame in a world which is calling for freedom and independence, and respect for human rights.

What has happened in Palestine in general and in the Gaza Strip in particular since the last session of the Conference last year reflects a further deterioration in the situation. The attack on Gaza, the blockade imposed on it, the occupation of the West Bank, and crippling restrictions on its workers, and the continuing occupation of the Golan and south Lebanon, as well as other Arab territories that have been illegally seized, reflect a decline in the values of justice and freedom and the absence of human values, with might prevailing over right.

From this rostrum we call for an end to all forms of occupation of Arab lands and for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with the holy city of Al-Quds as its capital.

For fraternal Iraq, we hope that it will be able to heal its wounds with the withdrawal of all the American and other occupying forces, so that its people can enjoy peace and security, unity and concord.

To conclude, I would like to point out that our country has signed one of the most important peace agreements of this century. I refer to the peace agreement of 2005 putting an end to the rebellion in Darfur. We call on the international community to support the efforts of the African Union and the Arab League to achieve peace through the negotiations taking place in Qatar between the Sudanese Government and the rebels in order to reach a comprehensive peace settlement.

We hope that this Conference will come up with recommendations and resolutions for immediate implementation, to stop us from plunging into the abyss.

Original French: Mr RUSU (Worker, Romania)

I will leave out the polite words and get down to the heart of my message.

This year, the ILO Conference is taking place at an extremely difficult time for all the Members of this international Organization. We are facing this crisis, with its very high rate of unemployment and an alarming growth in poverty throughout the world. Therefore, the framework created by this world tripartite meeting is essential to defining the solutions and lines of action that will contribute to improving the harsh situations faced by workers and their families throughout the world.

We welcome the decision by the ILO Governing Body to propose the elements of a global jobs plan as the ILO’s contribution to the recovery of economies and capital markets and to the improvement of the situation of workers. This plan is also based on the creation of high-quality productive jobs and on the conditions for guaranteeing decent work for all.

We are convinced that this global plan is a good response, formulated in the spirit of decent work, to the crisis being faced by the organizations that form part of the tripartite system of the ILO.

This global plan must also represent a common commitment made by ILO Members, who are the main protagonists in the real economy and who have to commit themselves to supporting the economic recovery and improvements in the social situations in their countries.

The ILO’s initiative concerning the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, which is an essential part of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, is significant and essential in order to guarantee equity, progress and social justice.

The problem concerning the elimination of forced and compulsory labour considered in the Report presented to the Conference this year, drawn up within the follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, is another concern for the trade union organizations of Romania.

For us, as representatives of workers’ organizations, it is very disturbing to see the ILO’s estimates concerning the number of victims of forced labour at the world level, which is rather considerable.

The phenomenon of globalization and the present crisis can hinder social progress. We consider that every ILO member State is required to respect the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and, implicitly, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour.

The global economic crisis is also being felt in Romania, and particularly as, at the end of 2008, a new political coalition resulted from parliamentary elections.

We consider that social dialogue and the practice of tripartism between the Government and representative workers’ and employers’ organizations at the national level should now be capable of producing solutions that will strengthen social cohesion and wise conclusions regarding the situation and national priorities.

We emphasize the importance of the meeting of the G20 in April this year, which demonstrated increasing concern over guaranteeing jobs for workers in poor countries and developing countries, but also in developed countries, by laying the groundwork for a global recovery plan.

In the context of the present crisis, the Government of Romania, following consultation with the social partners, has presented legislative proposals that consist of reducing costs in the public sector; extending the period of granting unemployment

benefits; providing facilities for employers and workers during the temporary interruption of their employment; and increasing contributions to social security.

A unique role, but also a necessary one for the smooth functioning of labour relations in the country, is played by the labour inspectorate. We regret the fact that the Government of Romania should, at this particular time, be trying to politicize, through a legislative act, this particular institution and avoid the provisions of Convention No. 81, which Romania ratified in 1947.

In spite of this, we express our discontent at the fact that the Romanian Government has not observed the provisions of the law adopted by Parliament on increasing wages in the education sector; the insufficient allocation of necessary funds for the research and innovation sector; the wage system in the budget sector; and the non-observance of legal decisions as regards the granting of wage rights by public institutions: all principal elements linked to social dialogue.

The tripartite experience, network and resources of the ILO are very useful to us at this time and we thank you for all the support that we have received from the Organization and for the support that we will enjoy in the future.

I would like to conclude my intervention by extending to you the warm greetings of the workers of Romania, and we can assure you of our support for the work of the ILO in the implementation of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Original Spanish: Mr CASTILLO (Worker, Uruguay)

On behalf of the Uruguayan workers' umbrella organization, the Inter-Union Workers' Assembly – National Confederation of Workers (PIT–CNT) delegation would like to make clear to the 98th Session of the International Labour Conference our position in relation to the issues under discussion and the content of the Report of the Director-General.

As we discuss the global crisis and its consequences, looking beyond what has been said by the Government, Workers' and Employers' delegates, we have considered an analysis of the crisis that looks at what has happened and the effects of the crisis on the real economy and its negative impact on jobs. This method of analysis has led to a number of statements to the effect that the world will no longer be the same after this recession, that we are all in the same boat, and that governments need to adopt an incentive or fiscal stimulus package in order to try to attenuate the effects of the crisis and ultimately maintain or create jobs.

We have heard statements in favour of protecting jobs by introducing flexible working practices or the much-cited flexicurity. Speakers have been advocating the adoption of contra-cyclical economic measures.

We agree with this in theory, but faced with the brutal levels of poverty in our region, we believe that the Government of Uruguay has adopted the right measures. Even during the period of growth, public funds were invested in the emergency plan, family allowances were increased, and health coverage was extended, reducing the poverty rate from one in three to one in five nationals.

We have heard very little about the causes of this crisis, which have also been the causes of other

crises, of similar or lesser magnitude. The causes of the crisis were not really mentioned in any of the documents emanating from the Group of 20 (G20) meetings in Washington and London. We have heard very little about the need for the social actors and the governments responsible for leading the economy and the global order to engage in a serious and searching criticism of the prevailing model.

Many speakers have advocated strengthening social dialogue and tripartite mechanisms, particularly, collective bargaining, which is enshrined in the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154).

The Report of the Director-General highlights the importance of drawing conclusions from "a pattern of globalization that is coming to a stop in order to build the foundations of a new globalization based on sustainable, fair and environmentally sound economic growth and social development in open economies and open societies".

Although some negative aspects of this model are given, such as the increasing imbalance in the world economy, and the burgeoning inequality in terms of income and distribution of wealth, the systemic nature of the crisis and its deeper causes are not made clear. We believe that, unless we learn from history, we will repeat the errors of the past.

Latin American workers are not prepared to relinquish our rights, particularly those contained in the fundamental Conventions of the ILO. On the contrary, it is vital that countries ratify and apply the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), to be certain that in times of crisis there is a basic standard of social benefits, as stipulated in the Convention, which, 57 years after it was adopted, still remains valid, deserving its place among the Conventions on fundamental labour rights.

We are not able to agree to any criterion which is linked to flexicurity, which is very much the buzz word of the moment.

We have heard about the persecution of trade unions, the violence and the murder of trade unionists, the exploitation and abuse of children, discrimination against women and minorities, flagrant violations of human rights. No one accepts responsibility for the errors and horrors of these models that triggered this situation. Any pact, therefore has to be the corollary of a candid discussion aiming to put an end to the human suffering and not the beginning.

We welcome the valuable key ideas outlined by the Director-General in his introduction of the Global Jobs Pact: employment and social protection are the cornerstones of the proposal, and will be the basis for the recovery policies or contra-cyclical measures.

The following are examples of actions that make up the agenda of the Crisis Committee, put forward by the trade union movement, and we welcome their inclusion in the Report: guarantees and loans to small and medium-sized enterprises; specific measures on working hours and skills acquisition; unemployment benefit and programmes for labour stability; age-specific measures; investment in infrastructure and public goods, which is a typical contra-cyclical measure; the use of traditional tools for analysis, debates and consensus-seeking, such as social dialogue, tripartism, and, fundamentally, col-

lective bargaining based on the respect for workers' rights.

In our humble opinion, we need to discuss and arrive at models based on full respect of human rights, civil liberties, and individual guarantees, equality and non-discrimination, and fair and free trade. We need a model based on better distribution of wealth and long-awaited social justice.

Ms HORN (*Representative, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing*)

On behalf of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and the International Federation of Organizations of Street Vendors, Informal Market Vendors and Hawkers, StreetNet International, we would like to congratulate the Director-General of the ILO on his excellent Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*.

This intervention is about the effects of the global crisis on workers in the informal economy – meaning both precarious wage workers and own-account workers as described in clause 4 of the ILO's conclusions on decent work and the informal economy adopted in 2002.

Labour markets in many developing countries have well over half their workers struggling to eke out livelihoods in various forms of precarious and informal work. The Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses heard that this figure amounts to 92 per cent in India.

There is a myth that these workers are somehow cushioned against the effects of the crisis. On the contrary, informal workers, particularly women, tend to occupy the bottom of the global economy pyramid, with less protection and flexibility than their formal counterparts. Informal firms and wage workers, in times of economic trouble, have no cushion to fall back on and have no option but to keep on operating or working. In addition, as more and more workers crowd into the informal economy, the net result is that more and more firms, or individuals, are competing for smaller and smaller slivers of a shrinking pie. Unemployment, in this instance, is eclipsed by increasing impoverishment – and the working poor becoming poorer.

By way of example, an estimated 1–2 per cent of the urban population of the world lives off collecting and recycling paper, cardboard, plastic, glass and metal waste. Since September–October 2008 there has been a downturn in demand and price for recyclable waste as a result of a drop in demand from Asia for raw materials and packing materials.

The decline in exports of manufactured goods to developed countries has resulted in a decline in demand for recycled waste materials and a drop in the selling price of waste. Waste collectors around the world are now earning significantly less than before, or facing loss of livelihoods altogether.

Many local governments are exacerbating these trends as they respond to the crisis by terminating temporary contracts of precarious workers. They are also evicting informal traders from the public space which constitutes their workplace, without proper consultation regarding viable alternatives, in misguided attempts to attract infrastructure investment by selling off public assets to private property developers. In my country, South Africa, this is even more pronounced as local governments turn a blind eye to the global jobs crisis in their preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

This is not only destroying the livelihoods of large numbers of precarious and informal workers, but also having negative effects on the food security of poor consumers by eliminating their access to cheaper basic fresh food and household goods, as traditional marketplaces, instead of being improved and upgraded, are being replaced by new multinational retail malls.

As we speak, a life and death struggle is being waged in Durban, South Africa, around a proposed new development to demolish a 99 year old market, a protected heritage site, providing fresh produce at reasonably cheap prices to the city's low-income consumers, along with ten surrounding informal markets, where 7,000–10,000 informal traders are eking out a living. The Durban municipality proposes to build a modern mall in this area, where there are already eight to ten other malls in a ten kilometre radius. The effects of such a development, during the current crisis, on the livelihoods of the informal traders in the area and on the food security of Durban's low-income communities, will be devastating.

In line with the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the Strategic Policy Framework 2010–15 and the proposed ILO Global Jobs Pact, we urge governments to bring their local government authorities into their economic recovery plans as a matter of urgency, and encourage them to adopt local economic development strategies promoting retention of employment and existing livelihoods, and promoting innovative local social protection schemes, as their contribution to economic recovery.

They should also sensitize local governments about the negative long and medium-term consequences of any short-term measure which has the effect, albeit unintentional, of destroying livelihoods, especially of the most vulnerable workers, during the global economic crisis.

They should also urge local governments to engage in extensive and effective social dialogue with the objective of: being fully accountable to their civil society constituents; improving levels of transparency about development decisions involving public assets; and engaging the participation of the most vulnerable workers in the solutions at local government level contributing to national economic recovery plans.

Such social dialogue should complement other levels of collective bargaining and social dialogue, i.e. bipartite, tripartite, multi-partite, national and international, with all the social partners, including organized informal economy workers.

Mr PÉREZ (*Worker, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*)

I am going to start by reading out the Preamble to the ILO Constitution, which reads as follows:

Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;

And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required; as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment

and the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education and other measures;

Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries;

This is the challenge facing the workers of the world. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, efforts are being made to comply with these principles enshrined in ILO texts, statutes and standards. However, at this 98th Session of the International Labour Conference, we have seen and listened to a number of representatives of the IMF and the World Bank who have been trying to convince us, together with the employers, that the crisis is the responsibility of all of us.

The responsibility for the crisis lies with those who implemented neo-liberal policies in different countries around the world. For them it was only the market that could solve the problems of humanity.

However, these measures which they forced on our countries only achieved drastic reductions in education, health, social security and all of this led to unemployment, poverty, hunger, crime, prostitution, drug trafficking, more flexible labour conditions, outsourcing, social disputes and wars.

They claimed that the aim was to put an end to the concept of the sovereign nation State. In the name of globalization, progress and other supposedly new paradigms, they imposed the privatization of goods and wealth of the country on docile governments. And those who dared to oppose and resist these impositions were discredited, order was subverted and they were classed as terrorists. They were subject to trade embargos and coups d'état were even supported or their territories invaded.

Now that their measures have failed and they have been plunged deep into crisis and are heading towards major, legendary bankruptcy, these transnational companies are now coming with a discourse saying that the way out of this structural crisis of the capitalist system is that the workers and peoples of the world need to make sacrifices. In other words, they want us to accept, in the name of tripartism and globalized social dialogue, without social conflict, millions of layoffs and a reduction in wages of up to 50 per cent, a freezing of the minimum wage, and we need to accept seeing our social benefits and the scarce resources of our countries being used to subsidize their companies and financial institutions. What a nerve!

The workers and peoples of the world do not want to put up with more sacrifices so that employers can continue to maintain their profit margins and keep filling their coffers as though nothing has happened. The response is written in the Preamble of the ILO Constitution, namely that with no justice there will be no peace in the world. We workers of the world will not accept that the crisis continues to weigh on our shoulders. Those who caused the crisis should pick up the pieces.

I come from a faraway land, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a country that is a friend of the poor enslaved peoples in Latin America. On this continent we have seen profound changes in this

last decade in terms of social, political, economic and cultural changes. As a result of the struggle of these peoples we are freeing ourselves from oppression, the oppression of the neo-liberal model, and we want to be free of capitalist exploitation.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we have an experience that is being built on trial and error. Nevertheless, this is an experience that we all share in, and even though some criticize it, the majority of popular sectors, workers and the Government support it. A society different to capitalism is possible. It is possible to have a democratic society with equality and social justice. This is what we are striving for in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

This 98th Session of the ILO Conference should ensure that workers and governments respect the rights of workers and peoples and in this way we can start on the way to peace in the world.

Original German: Ms HAGEMANN (Representative, Kolping International)

May I first thank you for giving me the opportunity to put forward to you our position, which is the result of many years of cooperation between Catholic and trade union organizations. It has been brought together by Kolping International, an NGO with a consultative status at the United Nations. Kolping International is an association with about 450,000 members in 5,300 Kolping families in more than 60 countries. The concept of decent work is at the heart of our programme, especially its application in the informal sector.

At this time of very serious crisis, the concept of decent work is being put to an acid test. We have to find arguments which stress the dignity of people at work, thus ensuring that it is a cornerstone of our economic and environmental decisions.

Therefore, we believe that this pillar of human rights at the workplace is vital to overcoming the prevailing financial and economic crisis and coping with climate change and the food and energy crises. This is in the area of core labour standards. But there are other standards mentioned in the Director-General's Report, *Tackling the global jobs crisis: Recovery through decent work policies*. These have to do with Conventions which, in addition to fundamental principles and rights at work, defend the rights of workers in specific sectors, age or gender groups, such as Conventions Nos 97 and 143, pertaining to the rights of migrant workers.

These crises have brought stiffer competition in their wake. All markets are affected: raw materials, food, agricultural products and, of course, the labour market. Burgeoning unemployment is going to mean that there is greater pressure on working terms and conditions, with an ensuing erosion of workers' rights. And this not only holds true for the economically weaker countries which mainly produce for the markets of rich countries, providing raw materials and services, but in all countries operating in a free market. Wage dumping, unemployment, precariousness of labour and discrimination are going to exacerbate this ongoing problem.

Workers' rights are protected to some extent by national legislations which are more or less based on ILO standards. But when the pressure on internally agreed standards and national legislation becomes too great, the trade unions will not be able to cope with the situation alone. Any solution will require the support of civil society, as well as a broad consensus and a political will to protect workers,

irrespective of whether they are in the formal or informal sector. Broad-based social dialogue is necessary to attain this consensus. This presupposes that ILO standards have to be applied in national law and practice, and their application monitored by independent bodies.

Many governments and social partners in the richer countries believe that ratifying some of these agreements is basically part of the development process. It is not deemed a necessity to adjust them to a changed market situation.

The example of the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177), is a case in point and shows that there is a need to do this. It would appear that in some countries home work is better protected under national legislation than under Convention No. 177. The majority of countries feel that it serves no purpose if they wish to remain competitive at the international level and only five countries have ratified it so far. However, the ratification of Convention No. 177, in the productive countries is vital, both for reasons of development policy and gender equality, because the vast majority of people involved in this work are women.

In addition, many of the consumer products made for the wealthier countries are made in the homes of women workers in developing or emerging countries. The lack of protection for these workers means that prices can be kept low. If the receiving countries were to sign this Convention, this would spell recognition for this category of workers throughout the world. It would also be a clear recognition of social responsibility for a fair and equitable globalization.

This recognition would make it possible for workers in the producing countries to claim their rights in their own countries, and it would also mean that

the governments in those countries would have a real inducement to protect their people from exploitation and poverty.

The example we have given here holds true for many other Conventions, whose ratification rates leave much to be desired. It will certainly apply to the Convention concerning domestic workers which we shall be examining next year. By transposing these standards into national law and monitoring their application, workers will be protected – resulting in industrial peace.

ILO standards are minimum standards, but national law can obviously go beyond them. But these standards should not be undermined. They will not dampen competition but, on the contrary, enhance it, to the benefit of everyone and above all the workers.

In a global world, crises do not remain within national borders and find national solutions. Account has to be taken of our interdependent world. This is where Conventions, which have been adopted at international level on a tripartite basis, play a major role. They not only constitute instruments of economic cooperation but also measures to assume responsible international governance.

Consistency and sustainability should also be the hallmarks of employment policy. And this is the responsibility of those who take decisions for the forthcoming generations. The concept of decent work has the potential to come up with answers to the crisis and to pave the way for a world that is less vulnerable to crisis. Since the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, this has been the aim of the tripartite constituency.

(The Conference adjourned at 8.15 p.m.)

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