Dear Chairman!

Dear participants of the Conference!

Excellencies! Ladies and gentlemen!

First of all let me please congratulate the Chairman - Mr/ Ms ........................................ for being elected to chair the Plenary sitting of the 102\textsuperscript{nd} (one hundred second) session of the International Labour Conference!

Hereby I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the 102\textsuperscript{nd} International Labour Conference. It is of a great importance for all of us that social dialogue is one of four strategic objectives of the ILO and one of the major topics of 102\textsuperscript{nd} (one hundred second) session of the Conference.

This year the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia together with our partners – government and trade unions - is celebrating 20 (twenty) years of it’s foundation and establishing functional social dialogue in Latvia.

In 1993 the Government adopted the Concept on the Principles of Developing a Tripartite Partnership in Latvia. Following this decision in December 1993 the Tripartite Consultative body of employers, state and trade unions started its work. For employers, in first place it was a need to explain the role of business and entrepreneurship within the society and the free market economy.

In the following year – 1994 – the International Labour Organization Convention no. 144 (one hundred forty four) on Tripartite Consultations was ratified by the Parliament of Republic of Latvia.

Since then we have experienced a dynamic development of social dialogue structures and its content. Financial and economic crisis is continuing in number of EU countries and around the world. We have also learned our own lessons we would like to share with you.

Latvia is continuing its recovery from the deep recession of 2008-2009. Latvia’s total consolidation measures between 2008 - 2011 were almost 17% (seventeen percent) of the GDP. It was a very hard task for all of us!
Social partners engaged themselves in the public debate and in the work of various working group at the national level to stabilise economic and financial situation. We called upon the Government:

- to reduce budget deficit by adopting fiscal stability law,
- to implement structural reforms,
- to provide stimulus for economic activity,
- to maintain coordinated and stable social system and
- to ensure public support to the reforms.

Partnership at national level together with political coalition parties, social partners and other co-operation partners was established to reduce budget deficit in 2009 of more than 0.7 (zero point seven) billion Euros.

As a result we can proudly say that Latvia is one of the few countries that have managed to go through the sharp austerity measures without massive strikes and social unrest. Latvia managed to preserve social peace and was able to put in place structural reforms and to restore economic growth. Today, the GDP data shows that Latvia is still the fastest growing economy in the European Union.

The results confirm once more the importance of effective partnership at national level! The National Tripartite Cooperation Council is co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Latvia, the President of Employers’ Confederation and the Chairmen of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia.

At the same time number of challenges remains for our country to be tackled by common efforts in the framework of the social dialogue, namely:

- social inequality and poverty,
- unemployment, especially youth and long-term unemployment,
- increase shortage of labour,
- mismatch of skills and labour available,
- ensure inclusive, sustainable and balanced growth as part of European economy.

Social partners strongly support Latvia’s objective to enter the Eurozone in 2014 and to become a member of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development in the very near future.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deep confidence: a well structured and stable system of the social dialogue is crucial for creating favourable environment of economic, employment and social policy. Result oriented social dialogue can give positive outcomes for the society in general.
We are aware about ILO Governing Body decision to set out a 7 (seven) year cycle for recurrent discussions of the 4th (fourth) strategic objective of the ILO set in the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. Our proposal is to change a seven years cycle to a five years cycle to be able to react more quickly to the challenges of our societies and economies.

This year the 20 years’ anniversary of the Social dialogue in Latvia will be celebrated in September. We will mark the 20 years of practice of social dialogue. We would also like to raise awareness public institutions and society in Latvia and in other countries on the value of social dialogue. We have already invited Mr Guy Ryder, Director General of the ILO, to take part in the social dialogue celebrations in Riga!

Let’s celebrate it! Let’s also preserve together a high value of the social dialogue. It is our common task to ensure a balanced social economic development of our societies as part of the European social model!

Thank you for your attention!