



## THIRTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**International Institute for Labour Studies**  
**Report of the 43rd Session of the Board**

1. The Board of the International Institute for Labour Studies held its 43rd Session on 9 November 2001. It had before it the report of the Director,<sup>1</sup> the Programme and Budget for 2002-03,<sup>2</sup> and a document concerning the acceptance of contributions and gifts in support of the Institute's activities.<sup>3</sup> The Director-General of the ILO chaired the session.
2. In his opening remarks, the Director-General referred to recent developments which emphasized the importance and increasing relevance of the Institute's work for the ILO as a whole. The recent ILO Global Employment Forum reflected a growing awareness that a new phase of globalization had begun, marked by deepening preoccupation with its social dimension. Decent work was the ILO's answer to such concerns, and the research work of the Institute was an important complement to the work of the ILO in this field. The Asian Regional Conference meeting in Bangkok in August had also called for decent work to be translated into development policies at the national level. All this pointed to a growing demand for the Institute's research on decent work, and to a need for greater policy integration within the ILO as a whole. It was for this reason that he had set up a new Policy Integration Department to support the senior management team.
3. The Institute's research and outreach activities would therefore be essential for the ILO in future. They would be pursued through the Institute's unique means of action: testing new frontiers of research; carrying effective outreach activities to the outside world; and serving as a forum for open dialogue between ILO constituents and other policy-makers and academics, free from the usual constraints of the negotiating process. The Director-General emphasized that in order for the ILO to benefit from these activities, it was essential to respect the Institute's autonomy of action and its academic freedom, which were the basis of free inquiry and innovation.
4. The Director-General said that this was the last session of the Board at which Mr. Gopinath would be present in his capacity as Director of the Institute, a post which he

<sup>1</sup> INS.B.XLIII/1.

<sup>2</sup> INS.B.XLIII/2.

<sup>3</sup> INS.B.XLIII/3.

had held for 14 years, the longest tenure of any Director in the history of the Institute. A new Director would be appointed early next year. Mr. Gopinath would continue to assist the ILO in various ways. The Director-General recalled that the Institute provided valuable support to him in the transition team, and that Mr. Gopinath was responsible for coordinating the preparation of his first Report to the Conference on decent work. Mr. Gopinath had faced many difficult situations with calm and judgement, and had consistently sought creative solutions through consensus. The Director-General also extended his thanks to Ms. Ute Schaefer whose ability and goodwill had been a source of unfailing support. He expressed gratitude to the Board for its commitment to the role of the Institute within the overall structure of the ILO at difficult times of doubt and disagreement. He hoped to have more frequent occasions to meet with the Board to reflect together on wider policy issues.

## Report of the Director

5. Introducing his report, the Director recalled that this marked the end of the first biennium of the Institute's new programme based on the ILO's goal of decent work. Several activities which started in 2000-01 would be further pursued in the next biennium. In reporting on these activities he would necessarily anticipate issues relevant to the discussion under item 2 of the agenda.
6. As regards the research programme, in the period under review the Institute had begun to examine causal interrelationships between the four strategic objectives of decent work. Preliminary statistical work to develop appropriate indicators had been completed. Two types of interrelationships were explored: causalities between the four strategic objectives themselves; and connections between decent work and development. The focus had been on the relationship between decent work and growth and productivity as this line of causation was not as clear as the path from growth to decent work.
7. The role of institutions and public policies in promoting and implementing decent work was an essential link in the causal chain. In this connection, the Institute's work on civil society had to be seen in its proper perspective. Its basic aim was to assist the tripartite constituents to strengthen their own partnerships and alliances with civil society for common goals. "Civil society" was a vague term, and comprised very different types of groups operating at different levels. The Institute was focusing more on community-based organizations and self-help groups providing services at the grass-roots level, rather than NGOs at the international level. This was particularly relevant for the informal economy, where the ILO constituents were already working at the field level with appropriate grass-roots and community-based organizations in combating child labour. The point of departure for the study was of course the constitutional provisions and the governance system of the ILO. There would be close consultation with the members of the Board in the future development of this activity.
8. In the outreach area, there had been a complete revision of the internship programme in terms of the curriculum, with special emphasis on gender and development, and utilization of new technologies and methods of interaction during the course itself. As a new generation of staff and constituents entered the ILO, the internship courses ensured the transmission of the values of tripartism in general, and the policy implications of decent work, in particular. As requested by the Board consultations with the Turin Centre had led to an agreement to collaborate on training programmes and on pedagogical technology. Consultations with countries in the Arab world had led to proposals for more ILS outreach activities in the region. These consisted of an internship course and a seminar on decent work to be carried out in 2002-03. The Director expressed his thanks to the representative

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of Saudi Arabia on the Board, Mr. Alhadlaq, for his initiatives and efforts. This was an example of how Board members helped to shape the future activities of the Institute.

9. The Director reported that in response to earlier demands by the Board, steps had also been taken to strengthen consultation with academics, and to establish a virtual network of academics to replace the academic component to the Board, which had been abolished in the last decade.
10. The Director drew the Board members' attention to the publications produced during the period under review. He said that the Institute's distribution policy and mailing lists were being thoroughly reviewed and revised. In future, all members of the Board and Governing Body would systematically receive all the major publications of the Institute. Furthermore, all Institute staff and their activities would be henceforth on the web site, enabling all Board members to be in touch with them at all times.
11. Mr. Ahmed (Worker member) began his speech by expressing appreciation, on behalf of the Workers' group as a whole, for the work of Mr. Gopinath during his 14 years of tenure. He asked that the members of the Board be kept fully informed of the Institute's activities. He argued that meeting once a year was not sufficient to ensure timely communication between the Institute and its tripartite constituents. Referring to article II of the Institute's Regulations, he proposed the convening of the Executive Committee of the Board between regular sessions.
12. Mr. Ahmed cautioned against excessive reliance on information technology in outreach activities. Trade unions in poor countries did not have easy access to these technologies, and the Institute needed to diffuse the results of its activities through hard copy as well. He said that the social partners should be involved in the country studies being planned by the Institute. He invited the Institute to establish links between its own research programme and the *Universitas* programme on decent work funded by the Government of Italy.
13. While expressing appreciation for what had been said by the Director of the Institute on the role of civil society, he stated that the basic constitutional obligation of the Office was to strengthen the constitutional partners, and the role of NGOs should not be emphasized at the expense of the social partners. He also remarked that a large part of the world's labour force was in the informal and the agricultural sectors and that the policies of decent work should benefit these sectors as well.
14. With regard to the comparison between Sweden and the Republic of Korea carried out by the Institute, he observed that while Sweden was a model of social democracy and social dialogue, workers in the Republic of Korea were not allowed to play a similar role.
15. He concluded by expressing the wish that some of the Institute's research and outreach activities be targeted at the social partners in the developing countries, where the costs of research and training were especially high.
16. The representative of South Africa joined other members of the Board in congratulating Mr. Gopinath. He expressed appreciation for the Institute's work as manifested in the production of new statistical indicators, publications, and outreach activities. He also noted with satisfaction the strengthening of relationships with the Turin Centre. However, access to the Centre remained problematic for developing countries, and they were most in need of intervention. He feared that due to inadequate access to information technology, the Institute's electronic networks and online conferences might also remain the preserve of an elite, and he encouraged the Institute to increase collaboration with academic institutions and research centres in Africa.

17. Mr. Barde (Employer member) said his comments concerned both the Director's report and the Programme and Budget for 2002-03. He expressed gratitude and appreciation for Mr. Gopinath's work and hoped to be able to continue drawing on his experience. Mr. Barde complimented both documents but found some of the language on research to be relatively abstract. He cautioned the Institute not to overemphasize the notion of "civil society" as one had to question whether NGOs were representative, legitimate and effective in their work. Also, while NGOs intervened at the international level, they were not called upon to participate in negotiations among the social partners at the national level. With regard to decent work as the main focus of Institute activities, Mr. Barde said that, in the light of current demographic pressures, work was a priority while decent work was more an ideal. Keeping in mind the need to communicate with the outside world, he also cautioned that there was a danger of causing confusion in the public mind between concepts like decent work, the Declaration and the Global Compact.
18. On the issue of research on regulation of the labour market, it would be useful to keep in mind that environment and mentalities played a major role in this area and that excessive regulation could hamper employment. He also referred to the problems in enforcing labour standards in the informal economy. Finally, he particularly appreciated the proposals for outreach activities contained in the Programme and Budget for 2002-03 (paragraph 56).
19. After congratulating Mr. Gopinath, Mr. Dahlan emphasized the need for greater participation by the Board members in the Institute's activities. He argued that one-day meetings were not sufficient for Board members to positively contribute to the Institute's understanding of current labour market changes, for example the issues which are emerging as a result of migration flows. He called for more frequent interaction among Board members, for example through the Internet or other modern forms of communication.
20. Mr. Arbeloa (Employer member) supported the idea of strengthening relationships with the Turin Centre which was exemplary within the ILO system. Programmes aimed at deepening this link would be of great benefit to the ILO and its constituents, especially those from developing countries. Second, he emphasized the need for studies focusing on the informal economy. Third, with regard to NGOs, he argued that he had no reservation about their role, provided that they worked through workers' and employers' organizations, which were the legitimate social partners as they responded to constituents. In Venezuela, for example, 75 NGOs were affiliated to the employers' organizations.
21. Mr. Mansfield congratulated Mr. Gopinath for his stewardship of the Institute over the past 14 years. The report was of high quality, and the Workers' group valued and supported the Institute. He expressed his hope that the Institute would work on the problems of casualization and informalization and on the problems of working people in poorer countries.
22. The representative of Saudi Arabia congratulated Mr. Gopinath for his work and for the documentation before the Board. He was glad that the requests he had made for projects in the region were followed up by the Director, and he supported the proposals made. He encouraged the Institute to engage in cooperation with research centres in the Arab countries, particularly through the contacts established with the Gulf Cooperation Council, with a view to producing research publications of interest to the Arab world.
23. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation thanked the Director for his contribution. Her Government supported the Institute's programme set out for 2002-03 and emphasized the need to address problems related to globalization, unemployment, poverty and decent work. She stated that the scope of the Institute's research programme

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might be expanded in future and suggested joint research between the Institute and national institutes of a similar nature, including the Labour Institute of the Russian Federation.

24. The Director noted a general desire for closer involvement of Board members in the activities of the Institute in the future. Mr. Ahmed's proposal to form an Executive Committee of the Board, as provided for under the Institute's Regulations, would be brought to the attention of the Chairperson and to the new Director.
25. He also noted that the comments made by the Workers and the Employers on civil society referred to the constitutional role of the tripartite constituents; the capacity and role of the NGOs; and the ambiguity of civil society organizations. As he said, the project on civil society would proceed in close consultation with Workers and Employers. The preliminary results of research pointed to the need to focus on community-based organizations which provided services and organization in the informal economy and the agricultural sectors, the importance of which had been stressed by both Workers and Employers. Mr. Sanzouango had referred to ways in which employers were working with civil society organizations. The Institute's work needed to build on such experiences to identify the areas of common interest between the tripartite constituents and civil society organizations, and the modalities of their cooperation.
26. Referring to Mr. Barde's statements about the relatively abstract nature of the research proposals, the Director stated that this reflected the highly technical nature of the new areas of research. However, the Institute would in future identify and define key issues to promote discussion and feedback. As regards the methods used, they included, inter alia, statistical indicators, econometric modelling, case studies and field research.
27. The Board took note of the report of the Director.

## **Programme and Budget for 2002-03**

28. The Director said that since most of the earlier discussions had focused on issues concerning the programme and budget proposals, he would limit his introduction to two remarks. The first concerned the Turin Centre as referred to in paragraph 10. The Institute's joint activities with Turin would provide training modules for country programming and project formulation on decent work. They would be relevant both for ILO staff and for ILO constituents. He also noted the advances made by Turin in the application of new technology. The Institute hoped to benefit from this expertise in such areas as video conferencing, electronic networks and other applications.
29. The second point referred to education and outreach activities. The events of 11 September probably ushered in awareness of a new phase of globalization. The Institute had a role to play within the ILO in shaping this new phase, particularly with respect to universal values in the world of work. He stated that the pace of change and the inter-generational shifts of perspectives, particularly in the last ten years, should not be underestimated. There was a need to place universal values within the context of regional diversity and differences in cultures and traditions in different parts of the world. Several years ago the Institute had begun to address the issue of work and religion; it was currently organizing a meeting of high-level academics to examine the resonances of decent work in the great religious traditions of the world. Such exercises were part of the wider effort needed to promote greater dialogue between cultures and civilizations.
30. Mr. Ahmed stated the importance of the issue of migration, referring to the nearly 3 million refugees in Pakistan and the related problems of inequality and social exclusion. He urged the Institute to take into account the conclusion of the Global Employment

Forum in its future work. Against the background of globalization and the social inequalities it engendered, the initiative to start an international dialogue on work across peoples with different cultural and religious traditions was highly valuable. He stated his support for paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of the programme and budget regarding cooperation with the Turin Centre. He stated that the Institute's research programme should address broad issues of macroeconomic policy and involve the social partners. He stated his hope that new synergies could be found with other departments of the ILO and that funds could be raised from external donor institutions to support such work.

- 31.** The Board adopted the Programme and Budget for 2002-03, *and accordingly transmits the programme to the Governing Body of the ILO for endorsement and the budget for final approval, in accordance with article II, paragraph 6, of the Regulations of the Institute.*

## Acceptance of contributions and gifts

- 32.** The Board recommended to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee of the Governing Body of the ILO the acceptance, with thanks, of the contribution of the employers' confederations of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden of \$5,000 for co-financing a fellowship to enable a candidate from employers' circles to participate in an internship course at the Institute.

## Other questions

- 33.** Mr. Arbeloa (Employer member) asked if the Institute was doing work on the issues of demography and economic development and growth.
- 34.** The Director responded that the question of demography and decent work was essentially one for the ILO's Employment Sector. He agreed that this was an area of importance, and it would be necessary to consult with the Employment Sector regarding the Institute's possible future work on these issues.
- 35.** The Director closed the meeting by expressing his thanks to his colleagues and for all their support and collaboration during his term of office. He thanked the members of the Board for the kind words they had addressed to him personally. The guidance and firm support they had given to the Institute at a crucial moment of its history would remain part of its institutional memory. The future success of the Institute depended on the close cooperation and dialogue between the management of the Institute and its Board. This was a precious legacy and tradition which he was sure his successor would continue in future.

Geneva, 12 November 2001.

*Point for decision:* Paragraph 31.