



FOURTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General**First Supplementary Report:
World Conference against Racism,
Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia
and Related Intolerance**

1. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance took place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September 2001. It was preceded by preparatory committees (in May 2000, May 2001 and August 2001) in Geneva, and by regional and expert meetings. The ILO took an active part in the preparatory process, and in the Conference itself.¹
2. In the preparatory process, the ILO was represented by the Equality and Employment Branch of the International Labour Standards Department and the International Migration Branch. External offices and other ILO representatives attended some of the regional preparatory meetings.
3. At the Conference the ILO was represented by a tripartite delegation of the Governing Body (Mr. Tou, Chairperson; Lord Brett for the Worker members; and Mr. Tabani for the Employer members).² The Director-General attended the first part of the session. The Office was represented by members of the Equality and Employment Branch, the International Migration Branch, the Bureau for Workers' Activities, the Department of Communications, and the Pretoria Office.
4. The Director-General addressed the plenary session of the Conference. He stated in his address that the ILO would examine the results of the Conference to determine whether additional ILO tools were needed in the fight against discrimination. The Conference helped make it clear that the ILO should increase its efforts to identify and combat racial and related discrimination in the workplace, along with its constituents. Activities at the Office which could contribute to the follow-up would include:

¹ For background of ILO participation, see [GB.280/LILS/12](#).

² [GB.280/20](#).

- continued research and data collection on issues of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia;
 - workers’ education on combating discrimination in all its forms, including racism;
 - continued support of the Global Compact Initiative on Diversity and Equality including human resource development;
 - management training on issues of discrimination; and
 - supporting governments in their development of laws, policies, and administrative and enforcement mechanisms addressing racial discrimination at the workplace.
5. The ILO organized or took part in a number of panels and other events during the session. The ILO ran an information stand for delegates drawing many visits from delegates. It was staffed by the members of the ILO delegation at one time or another, including all the members of the Governing Body delegation. As concerns public information, the Director-General gave a press conference and was interviewed by the *Financial Mail*, the *Financial Times*, *Business Report*, the *Earth Times*, Bloomberg, SABC TV, SABC Radio, Channel Africa and UN Radio. Other members of the delegation were interviewed by the BBC World Service and Radio France International.
6. The principal concern of the ILO during the Conference was to highlight the economic and social aspects of racism and xenophobia on working men and women and on those seeking work, with a special focus on discrimination in the world of work, migrant workers and indigenous and tribal peoples. On the first issue, the ILO’s participation was within the framework of the theme “Discrimination is everybody’s business”. At the Conference itself, a panel on this subject took place the opening day of the Conference, hosted by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, within the Global Compact framework. The ILO was represented on this panel by the Chairperson of the Governing Body, and Mr. Tabani represented the International Organisation of Employers. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions was represented by Mr. Bill Jordan, General Secretary. This panel stressed the role of business in combating discrimination, and the importance of employers working with trade unions for this purpose. Another event was a multi-stakeholder workshop on fostering dialogue and cooperation with a panel on the practical aspects of implementing diversity, on which Lord Brett and EGALITE represented the ILO.
7. The subject of migrant workers was prominent throughout the Conference. In addition to discussions on how to refer to the issue in the Declaration and Programme of Action, there were various parallel events during the Conference, with the ILO’s participation assured by the International Migration Branch. The ILO was instrumental in preparing a publication on international migration, racism, discrimination and xenophobia, which was signed jointly by the Director-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration.
8. Indigenous peoples from around the world were a large presence in the Conference. ILO [Convention No. 169](#) figured prominently in these discussions, and the Office took part in several events organized around this question.
9. The Conference was designed to produce a Declaration and Programme of Action. The adoption process was a difficult one and the Conference itself unable to fully complete its work on time. As the Conference progressed, proposals on which agreement was difficult were not included. The two most controversial issues for finalizing the text were the Middle East, and reparations for past slavery. By the end of the Conference, the texts adopted for the draft Declaration and Programme of Action were available, though at the

time the present paper was written³ these documents had not yet been published in final form. The Office will provide to the March 2002 session of the Governing Body the paragraphs which are relevant to its work, once the final adopted text appears.

10. The ILO's interests are reflected in the language that was adopted. There are calls for the ratification and application of ILO Conventions relevant to discrimination, among other international conventions to be ratified, and for respect for the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The ILO's commitments to non-discrimination against migrant workers and the protection of indigenous and tribal peoples are also reflected. Generally speaking, the ILO can welcome the fact that the Conference called on States to eliminate racism against all workers, including migrants and migrant workers, and to ensure full equality before the law. States are further urged to eliminate barriers to participation in vocational training, employment and trade union activities, including collective bargaining. The Conference called for measures to advance non-discrimination at the workplace through multifaceted strategies and stressed the importance of the involvement of labour, management and non-governmental organizations. It highlighted multiple discrimination faced by women and the need to take positive or affirmative action.
11. The proceedings were very open and transparent. The ILO delegation was able to attend negotiation sessions, and to work with delegations to ensure that ILO concerns were reflected correctly in the text. This resulted in the correction of some imbalances and inaccuracies in the draft.
12. The cooperation between the ILO and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in organizing the joint activities on discrimination was successful and very fruitful. The Director-General's attendance drew significant attention from delegates and the media to the concrete measures needed to eliminate discrimination in the workplace, as perhaps the place where discrimination is most harmful. Indeed, the Secretary-General stated in his opening address to the Conference:

The workplace is surely one of the front lines. Discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, background and other qualities is all too common. Statistics have amply documented phenomena such as unequal pay for equal work, "the glass ceiling" that bars women from executive power, and the lack of access to opportunities and services experienced by some groups, but not others.
13. The possibility for members of the Governing Body to bring their diverse experience to the attention of the Conference in these and other events added a flavour of expertise and real-world experience that many delegates welcomed. The many events dealing with migrant workers cemented the ILO's place among those giving serious consideration to a growing and intractable problem.
14. The ILO Global Report on discrimination scheduled for 2003, in the context of the follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, will benefit from the information and positions generated by the Conference, and the plan of action to be adopted after the Global Report has already been planned as an ILO contribution to the follow-up to the World Conference.

Geneva, 2 November 2001.

³ 26 October 2001.