



FOR INFORMATION

THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Updates regarding CSR-related activities

**(c) Report of the Employers' Symposium
on the Evolving Corporate Social
Responsibility Debate: Issues for
Employers and their Organizations
(Geneva, 5-7 October 2005)**

1. The Employers' Symposium on the Evolving Corporate Social Responsibility Debate: Issues for Employers and their Organizations was held in Geneva from 5 to 7 October 2005. It was attended by 24 Employer representatives nominated by employers' organizations selected through consultations with the Employers' group of the Governing Body, as well as by observers from 11 multinational enterprises.
2. The agenda of the meeting, as approved by the Governing Body at its 293rd (June 2005) Session,¹ was the following:
 - review objectives and strategies of key non-business participants in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) debate, with a view to engaging with them on selected issues;
 - develop strategies for employers and their organizations with respect to CSR, and examine ways in which the ILO and other international agencies can support them.
3. In his opening remarks, the Director-General pointed to how CSR enables enterprises to secure their own future and contribute to the realization of decent work. Guest speakers from academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and trade unions, the major groups driving the CSR debate, explained their approaches and objectives with respect to CSR. The Director of the International Institute for Labour Studies was also invited to present his views on the role the ILO played in CSR.
4. In their discussions, participants stressed the business-driven nature of CSR, and noted how enterprises added value to their business by undertaking it. They recognized that the CSR debate was sometimes affected by misconceptions as to the role of business in society

¹ GB.293/10.

and inflated expectations, and suggested that greater engagement by employers' organizations in that debate could help to clarify issues. They were especially concerned that CSR appeared to be treated as a means to get enterprises to engage in matters that properly were the responsibility of the government, such as the enforcement of laws. They considered that the primary role of the ILO in relation to CSR should be to help the governments of member States to acquire the capacity effectively to enforce national labour legislation and regulations. They also felt that the ILO should promote dialogue between governments, workers' and employers' organizations, with a view to arriving at a better understanding of what CSR implies and what it does not. The conclusions adopted by participants stressed the voluntary and flexible nature of CSR, and addressed issues relating to supply chains and the multiplicity of codes.

5. The report and conclusions of the meeting can be obtained from the secretariat of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP).

Geneva, 10 January 2006.

Submitted for information.