

**Eighth sitting**

Friday, 8 June 2012, 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr Alburquerque de Castro

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

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

We will now resume our discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General.

Original Spanish: Ms GONZÁLEZ (Minister of Labour and Social Security, Cuba)

The topics on the agenda of this Conference – the youth employment crisis, the social protection floor, fundamental principles and rights at work, just to mention a few – are all areas which, today, are bearing the brunt of the global crisis affecting the entire world.

The fact that four out of every ten young people are unemployed is not only a social and economic disaster, but also a political one, which requires a commitment from governments to find a solution. In Cuba, free and compulsory education for all, right up to secondary level, prepares young people to enter the workforce. University and vocational college graduates, alongside skilled workers, required by the economic and social development of the country, are placed in jobs and trained in order to ensure that they can perform well at work.

The report on social protection floors for social justice and a fair globalization acknowledges that “social security is still far from being a reality for the vast majority of the world’s population”, and it calls for a broadening of coverage to establish levels of social protection, in order to guarantee an income and basic medical care for those who need it in order to have a decent life. However, to guarantee such levels, the responsibility lies with the States.

In this respect, in Cuba, social security is universal. It guarantees protection for salaried workers, members of cooperatives, land tenants, creative artists and self-employed workers, in the event of illness, accidents, old age, invalidity and maternity, as well as family assistance in the case of death.

Furthermore, the social security programme provides protection for those who are unable to work, and who do not have relatives who can help them or others who might need it.

In Cuba, the implementation of the social and economic policy framework, approved through a broad-based process of consultation with our people, does not involve social trauma. The economic model recognizes and promotes other forms and

types of non-State management besides the socialist State enterprise – the principal form of the national economy – which means that they are not deprived of this protection.

The Government recognizes, respects and guarantees compliance with the fundamental principles and rights at work, which enjoy constitutional status and are exercised by the people. The Labour Code, as well as the statutory labour standards that complement it, regulate the exercise all of these rights and duties.

Similarly, the policy of countering all forms of discrimination and promoting equality is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic, which establishes, as one of its fundamental principles, that everyone shall have the right to employment and to social protection, in accordance with the law.

Workers and their union’ representatives participate in the decision-making process, which concerns them from company-level up to the upper echelons of Government. They play a vital role in the process of drawing up labour and social security legislation, and in many instances, there is consultation on these projects at workers’ assemblies in the workplace.

We shall defend our achievements and hold on to our guarantees of the full exercise of the right to work and unity, which enable us to be masters of our own destiny – despite the aggression, and the anti-Cuban campaigns, which seek to justify the economic, financial and commercial blockade, and seeks to deprive us of our independence, sovereignty and free self-determination.

Original Spanish: Mr MARTINEZ (Worker, Argentina)

On behalf of Argentina’s workers, I would like to acknowledge the achievements made by Director-General Juan Somavia while at the helm of the ILO.

Establishing the concept of decent work has had an impact on national and international policies, and has promoted respect at work, the dignity of workers, and effective social dialogue.

That social dialogue is currently lacking in the international community and we need to re-establish it as a priority, with respect and trust as our guiding principles.

How can it be that at the ILO we have approved a Global Jobs Pact which seeks to share effort and commitment out evenly, while at the same time financial bodies are imposing unfettered austerity measures?

In a number of countries of the European Union, permanent austerity measures are being applied;

these focus on financial capital rather than citizens' needs.

The crisis in developing countries is having a negative impact on Latin America and the Caribbean and exacerbating, in some cases, unemployment rates, precarious working conditions and the lack of real and effective social dialogue.

The trade union movement in the Americas needs to be bolstered as a source of strength; we need to stand united to prevent austerity, yet again, from affecting workers and their families.

At the regional level we need to demand that workers' needs be included in political agendas; it is only by resolving unemployment and poverty that we can ensure social peace.

At the next meeting of the G20 in Mexico we will call upon governments to provide specific solutions to labour-related problems, and we will ask them to give priority to policies and sustainable development geared towards social inclusion, over the strictly economic measures that have been espoused thus far.

We need to apply measures which will foster the development of internal markets and restore the purchasing power which salaries can provide.

In Argentina, since 2003, we have been implementing public policies which view work as the cornerstone of economic and social development.

We have incorporated measures such as creating a universal child benefit, increasing the minimum wage, providing access to retirement benefit for those who work outside of the social protection system, and using collective bargaining to increase activity and employment.

Yet there still remains a great deal to be done; we need to end the poverty, marginalization and unemployment which affect our people.

We need to create more and more jobs, respecting labour rights, gearing policies towards young people, formalizing labour, doing away with caps on family allowance payments and adjusting the income taxes which are levied on workers' wages. And that is why we are saying no to the new income tax.

The workers in my country are demanding the creation of an economic and social development council as a suitable forum in which to discuss government policies which will make it possible to put an end to outstanding social debt and a body in which we can further and consolidate tripartite dialogue.

That same dialogue seems to have been disrupted today at the ILO. What has happened in the Committee on the Application of Standards reflects an uncompromising stance on the part of the Employers, which has had an impact on the structures of the Committee to the detriment of the ILO supervisory machinery.

I maintain that we need to inject new impetus into the ILO, reopening dialogue and restoring trust and respect between sectors.

The tripartite system is a key step towards social justice and that is a new challenge awaiting Guy Ryder. Guy, we wish you every success in your new post so that you can reach a consensus and reconcile different interests.

We as Workers reaffirm the value of decent work in achieving sustainable development with a just distribution of wealth, and returning to the values of equity and social justice which will guarantee a better future for our peoples.

Original Lao: Mr LASOUKANH (Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, may I first congratulate his Excellency, Mr Rafael Francisco Albuquerque de Castro, on his election as President of the 101st Session of the International Labour. I am confident that this Conference will achieve great success under his wise and able leadership. May I also express my congratulations to his Excellency Mr Juan Somavia for the successful completion of his term as Director-General of the ILO, and congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General. I fully support the Report submitted by the Director-General of the ILO.

On 16 February 2012, the Lao People's Democratic Republic signed a Decent Work Country Programme 2011–15 with the tripartite organizations and the International Labour Office. This is one of the key programmes which will contribute to the national socio-economic plan, particularly focusing on skills development and employment for students who graduate from primary, secondary and high schools. The programme has defined four strategic priorities, as follows.

The first priority is promoting employment, skills development, equitable growth and poverty reduction. We are focusing on creating increased opportunities for decent and productive employment, as well as fostering small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in rural areas. We are trying to increase the number of men, women and young people who have the skills required by the labour market in their region.

The second priority is to improve labour market governance. We are revising existing employment regulations and developing new ones, including the introduction of the minimum wage. We are also creating opportunities for workers in rural areas to have access to labour market information.

Thirdly, efforts are being made to improve and extend social protection to ensure the rights and interests of workers and their families. Tripartite organizations will have improved social security mechanisms to help them address the demands of the current socio-economic situation. Social protection is being extended to all factory workers throughout the country, which will ensure that they have the right to basic benefits.

Our fourth strategic objective is to improve the capacities of the constituents, and thus strengthen social dialogue in order to improve the environment for the labour force. Both workers and employers have a fundamental role to play in social dialogue, particularly when dealing with urgent issues, in accordance with the principles of a tripartite mechanism to protect the rights and interests of workers and employers.

In 2012, the Lao People's Democratic Republic considered denouncing the Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919 (No. 4), as it does not reflect the current employment situation in our country. However, we are considering ratifying the Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171). In addition, we are also revising our labour legislation, including by amending the title to reflect the fact that it is labour protection legislation. We are currently drawing up new legislation on social security, which is due to be finalized in 2013.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the International Labour Organization for its continued support to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. This support has contributed to our national, social and economic development.

Lastly, I wish the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference every success.

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

I would like to commend the Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia, for his effective leadership and for the many accomplishments the ILO registered during his long service. I would also like to congratulate the Director-General-elect, Mr Guy Ryder, on his election and I assure him of our full support in the discharge of his responsibilities.

The Government of Ethiopia welcomes the elaboration of an autonomous Recommendation on the social protection floor, the timely general discussion on the youth employment crisis, and the recurrent discussion of the strategic objectives of the fundamental principles and rights at work.

In light of the major thematic areas of the Conference, the Government of Ethiopia has been stepping up its efforts to lay down foundations for basic social protection and employment promotion as a durable solution to alleviate poverty. Various reform programmes undertaken by the Government to achieve broad-based, equitable, accelerated and sustained growth are bearing remarkable results in the country.

The country's five-year Growth and Transformation Plan has clearly recognized the key role of social development in enhancing people's living standards, poverty eradication, economic growth and good governance. This comprehensive development plan also includes a special focus on mainstreaming youth employment in development policies and strategies, expansion of employment services, job security and stability, and ensuring safety and health at work, thereby enhancing productivity and competitiveness. The plan has also given emphasis to micro and small-scale enterprises, supported by technical and vocational education and training programmes to facilitate the transition from school to work.

The Government of Ethiopia has a developed micro, macro and sectoral policies with the objective of achieving inclusive economic growth, enhancing social welfare, and achieving political stability. Policies that promote job creation and well functioning social protection systems are crucial for ensuring decent employment and improved standards of living.

In view of this, the Government of Ethiopia has developed a national employment policy which aims to maintain conditions of full employment through policy responses that will lead to sustainable growth in the economy and the prevention of labour market constraints on overall economic growth. Particular emphasis is given to training and improving the performance of public employment services and to promoting active labour market programmes.

In addition, a national occupational safety and health policy has been developed aiming to enable concerted and well targeted efforts with clearly defined responsibilities of the different actors in the world of work and to ensure healthy and safe working conditions.

The Government of Ethiopia is actively engaged in the process of developing a national social protection policy giving due consideration to public interventions which provide basic services to vulnerable groups in society. As part of the social protection system, we have been implementing a productive safety net programme with the objective of providing transfers to chronically food insecure populations in a way that prevents asset depletion at the household level and creates assets at the community level.

The coverage of the country's social insurance scheme, which was limited to the public sector, is now extended to employees in the private sector with gradual extension to those in the informal economy. Recently, the Government also introduced a health insurance scheme. These measures will supplement and transform the traditional practices of different types of informal social protection systems in the country and contribute to create a supportive environment for the operation of policy frameworks.

We support the follow-up mechanism of the ILO to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, since it represents an important promotional and practical tool to advance social progress and to address failure to respect fundamental rights at work. The Government of Ethiopia has integrated these and related international commitments of the country in its national poverty alleviation and sustainable development plan for their comprehensive implementation.

I take this opportunity to express my country's warm welcome to the Republic of South Sudan to the International Labour Organization as a new member State.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the Government of Ethiopia remains fully committed to the ILO's principles and objectives.

Original Russian: Mr KULYK (Worker, Ukraine)

Economic growth in Ukraine, which resumed after the global financial and economic crisis, has now taken the form of a fairly stable recovery. However, the threat of a second wave of the crisis and the resulting increase in competition on external markets, uncertainties in Ukraine's future relations with the International Monetary Fund, high prices of imported energy resources, especially natural gas – all this means that we can only hope for moderate growth of Ukraine's economy this year.

Nonetheless, our country has adopted a new social programme intended to raise the standard of living of our citizens within a short timeframe. The social initiatives adopted by the President are aimed at achieving a balance between economic growth and the standard of living of the individual.

The instruments being developed by the President are intended primarily to address social problems.

One family in four is earning an income below the minimum subsistence level, and 24.6 per cent of the population are below the poverty line, calculated on the basis of income per household member. Another serious problem is income inequality. Even according to official statistics, the income of the top 10 per cent of the population in terms of earnings is 5.2 times higher than that of the bottom 10 per cent.

The President has accordingly asked for the rapid introduction of a wealth tax. The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) and its affiliates have supported the President's social initiatives, as

they embody the trade unions' demands for decent work, fair income distribution and respect for workers' rights.

We have also reached an understanding with the Government in regard to the adoption of draft legislation on taxation of offshore transactions and transfer pricing. This is all consistent with the position of the unions advocating the closing down of tax havens.

There is considerable potential in the area of regularization of wages. According to various estimates, some 3 to 4 million persons in Ukraine are working without having established a legal employment relationship, and the shadow economy accounts for 50 per cent of the total wage bill.

Nevertheless, all of this has not solved the main problem: fair wages. Accordingly, the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, mainly through social dialogue with the Government, is pushing for wage and pension increases with reasonable state regulation of prices and rates. As a result, the Cabinet of the Ministers of Ukraine has adopted a Decision on wage increases for employees of institutions, establishments and organizations in all branches of the public sector, which provides for a phased increase in remuneration. It can be assumed that increasing wages in the public sector will lead to wage increases in the private sector. However, the growth rate in the minimum wage is not expected to keep pace with inflation growth rates this year.

The Ukrainian trade unions also have a positive view of the adoption of the Act on workers' professional development and of the Presidential Decree on the state human resource policy strategy for 2012–20. All of the trade unions' key demands have been taken into account in these documents.

We also hope that the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine will shortly adopt the Labour Code of Ukraine in the version endorsed by the high-profile Labour and Social Policy Committee of the Supreme Soviet.

The trade unions have done everything to ensure that the standards and provisions laid down in ILO Conventions and Recommendations were reflected as fully as possible in this legislation, which is of paramount importance to workers.

We are counting on the social partners to understand the need to preserve democratic principles which have been tried and tested over the decades, as regards the management of compulsory social insurance with the participation of representatives of insured persons and employers. We are also counting on further progress in the development of social dialogue and the design and implementation of employment policy guaranteeing the right of every individual to freely chosen employment.

The trade unions also rightly expect politicians to support their position in regard to prohibition of contract labour and other extreme forms of atypical employment which can undo what has been achieved so far in improving the security of workers' social situation.

Another joint initiative of the social partners has been the drafting and signing of the National Tripartite Agreement on Employment and Jobs, based on the ILO's Global Jobs Pact.

To conclude, I would like to share a few words with you: "The good of the people is the highest law" – as the ancient Roman political figure and philosopher Cicero put it many centuries ago. The truth and value of these words are consistent with

the spirit of our Conference. It is important for politicians and statesmen to remember this.

Mr MISKIN (*Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, Suriname*)

It is a great privilege for me as newly appointed Minister of Labour to take the floor during the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. As we move from last year's 100th Session, which was dominated by change made by youth, drastic changes have appeared again on a global level, not only affecting the developing world and small economies such as ours, but also the developed world.

Again we see global youth placed against threats such as rising unemployment. It is therefore very appropriate that our Organization has placed youth employment on the agenda.

When we elaborate on this issue, we must take a holistic approach, and we must not hesitate to talk about the macroeconomic policies of governments, the requirements of supranational organizations and the international financial institutions we lean on. Thankfully, the Director-General devoted much attention to the approach of these institutions in the light of the goals of our Organization in his recent Reports. This example of broad deliberations on labour should be adopted at the national level.

The Director-General emphasized some critical issues in this non-thematic Report this year and invited us to highlight issues that we as members would like to draw the attention of the newly elected Director-General. We would, however, like to thank the Director-General for his guidance of the Organization during the previous years.

National circumstances have changed after the institutionalization and evolution of the Decent Work concept, which is now presented more strongly as a development concept with a human face. With regard to social protection, tripartite partners in our country have agreed to take a national social security scheme into consideration. In this regard, it should also be mentioned that the tripartite Labour Advisory Board recommended the adoption of public legislation by consensus, in addition to the general rules in the draft new Civil Code which will regulate the issue of maternity protection along the lines of ILO Convention No. 183.

We appreciate the preparations and consultations regarding the Recommendation on the social protection floor which, if adopted, will complement existing standards. This Recommendation will provide flexible guidance to member States in building social protection floors within social security systems tailored to national circumstances and levels of development.

We as governments are encouraged to harmonize labour law efforts using the existing efficient structure of labour market institutions. The Director-General mentioned in his last thematic Report that labour market deregulation has not contributed to higher levels of investment in the economy. After long preparations, the Government of Suriname presented five draft labour laws to social partners, relevant NGOs and the university in March this year. The aim is to modernize existing laws and initiate new rules with regard to labour market institutions such as private and public employment agencies. Amendment of the legislation on the labour inspection has also been prepared. In order to further implement the recommendations and deci-

sions of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association and the Workers' Representatives Recommendation, 1971 (No. 143), we prepared a unified draft of the Freedom of Association Act and an amendment of the existing Collective Bargaining Agreement Act. The whole review process of the national labour legislation is guided by the recent standards and principles of the ILO.

As regards the development of our labour inspectorate to the next stage of delivering assistance to the labour market, I made initial arrangements in cooperation with the Labour Inspectorate to consider and expeditiously implement the plans of this service.

Labour inspectors received training on two occasions this year by senior experts of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean with the aim of strengthening the capacity of labour inspectors and further preparing them for the changed production environment.

With the most recent developments at the global level, more countries will need the guidance of the ILO. There is much turmoil and upheaval in the global economy, making more people vulnerable in the least expected places. While some fight to survive, others slide into lower living standards. The ILO should keep guiding member States with regard to recent developments in the global economy.

As the Minister responsible for labour, I wish to express my deepest gratitude for the leadership of Mr Juan Somavia. He has set very high standards. As a member State, we once again take this opportunity to renew our commitment to the principles, values and standards set by the International Labour Organization.

Mr SAT (*Government, Cambodia*)

On behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, as well as the Royal Government of Cambodia, it is my great honour to address this Conference.

The latest industrial relations situation in Cambodia is the following. Labour dispute resolution in industrial relations in Cambodia have remarkably improved in the last decade. Both employers' and workers' organization have become more mature in their relations. In the absence of a labour court, the Arbitration Council, founded with the assistance of the ILO in 2003, is a tripartite quasi-judicial system established to settle collective labour disputes in Cambodia. The Arbitration Council is very well recognized nationally and internationally as a fully independent labour tribunal in Cambodia and plays very important role in our industrial relations. The number of strikes also kept declining, from 45 in 2010 to only 34 in 2011, while the caseload in the Arbitration Council continued to increase in the last few years, from 145 cases in 2010 to 185 cases in 2011. While we have improved significantly over the last decade, we continue to invest significant time and resources with employers and unions into the continuing improvement of industrial relations overall, and we hope that the ILO will continue to support our tripartite partners in our endeavours.

As regards freedom of association, Cambodia ratified ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 in 1999. With these ratifications the Royal Government of Cambodia has established all necessary mechanisms to promote and protect freedom of association. The right of employer and workers to form associations are clearly delineated in the constitutional law and

labour law of Cambodia. According to this regulatory framework, workers and employers can freely organize their respective organization. This right includes freedom to join or not to join any association. Our labour law also allows workers to form multiple trade unions in an enterprise. We have a case of a factory with 5,000 workers and 17 enterprise unions. As of April 2012, we have over 2,500 enterprise-based trade unions, 60 trade union federations, ten trade union confederations, and one Cambodian Coalition of National Unions, established on 26 April 2012 as the national trade union in Cambodia. It should be noted that around 90 per cent of these trade unions emerged in the garment and footwear industries, comprised of 500 factories. I would like to request you to reflect on this protection of the right of association in Cambodia according to these numbers.

As regards working conditions, in order to improve working conditions in industry the Royal Government of Cambodia and employers' and workers' organization, with technical support from the ILO, agreed on the implementation of a monitoring programme called ILO Better Factories Cambodia (ILO BFC), which was launched in 2001. ILO Better Factories monitors working conditions in the garment sector, in addition to the monitoring done by labour inspectorate of the Government and the independent monitors of the buyers.

Social dialogue has also been greatly promoted in Cambodia over the last decade. To build a bridge for direct dialogue between the Government and the private sector, the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, established the Government-Private Sector Forum (G-PSF) in 1999. There are nine Government-Private Sector working groups in this G-PSF. Each of them focuses on particular issues and is co-chaired by a Government Minister and a representative of the private sector. The 8th Working Group focuses on labour and social affairs in which the ILO, workers and employers are present, raising issues pertaining to the law, regulations and practical challenges in doing business and promoting business in Cambodia.

In addition to the G-PSF, we also have many tripartite committees such as Labour Advisory Committee, the Governing Board of the National Social Security Fund, the National Employment Agency and its subcommittees, and the Arbitration Council Governing Body, in which labour-related policies are discussed and agreed by the tripartite constituents before they are formally adopted by the Government.

The Cambodian Trade Union Law started with a long series of tripartite consultative meetings facilitated by the ILO. The plenary was led and chaired by the representative of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and co-chaired by a representative of the trade unions and that of the employers. After each meeting, the Government also invited all parties to submit further comments. Inputs from the ILO were also welcomed. The process was thorough and inclusive, including translation for private sector investors. Our law is not only debated in the national language, but also takes into account the nature of investors in our country. The draft law was sent to the International Labour Office in Geneva for review and comment, after which additional tripartite consultation meeting were held. The Ministry has revised the draft and submitted it to the

Council of the Ministers for approval before sending it to the National Assembly.

On behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to express our profound thanks to the ILO for the treatment and sup-

port to Cambodia. It is my hope that the ILO will continue to support all the tripartite stakeholders in our endeavours and strengthening our industrial relations system, mechanisms and development in the years to come.

(The Conference adjourned at 10.50 a.m.)

Ninth sitting

Friday, 8 June 2012, 2.40 p.m.

President: Mr Alburquerque de Castro

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

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

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

Original Lao: Mr DOUANGPHACHANH (*Worker, Lao People's Democratic Republic*)

On behalf of the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), I would like to express our appreciation to the Director-General of the International Labour Organization for the Report to the Conference on the youth employment crisis. The report contains an objective expression of the efforts of the Organization to promote the principles of social justice within the framework of the ILO's standards, focusing on the development of a legal framework for labour administration.

The LFTU welcomes the Lao Government's ratification of several ILO Conventions and other international instruments concerning the protection of the rights and interests of workers in our country. In addition, the Lao Government has revised its legislation to bring it into line with the ILO Conventions. In recent years, the LFTU has been training workers and raising their awareness about labour law, trade union law and other related legislation.

The national tripartite system cooperates with the ILO on the promotion of social protection in all workplaces. In addition, we have set up the Migrant Worker Resource Centre, and are planning to revise and finalize legislation on the minimum wage. This law was promulgated by the Lao Government on 1 January 2012. Workshops have been held on a number of issues including collective bargaining, collective agreements on occupational safety and health, asbestos and migrant workers, with support from the ILO Subregional Office in Bangkok and other international organizations.

The LFTU has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Decent Work Country Programme for 2011–15. It is now incumbent on the LFTU, national tripartite organizations and our development partners to ensure the promotion of the fundamental principles and rights at work based on our strategic objectives as set out in the seventh national socio-economic development plan.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that the policies and strategies of the International Labour Organization

are our guidelines for national laws and policies on social protection and labour administration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ILO and the trade union organizations that have assisted us by sharing their experience and providing us with financial support. We hope that their technical assistance and cooperation will continue in the future.

We wish you all a successful Conference.

Mr LOKUGE (*Minister of Labour and Labour Relations, Sri Lanka*)

Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President on his election to chair the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I consider it is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to address this distinguished gathering.

Sri Lanka welcomes the very comprehensive and informative Report of the Director-General and highly appreciates the achievements in terms of 19 outcomes under five strategic objectives covering the areas of decent employment opportunities, social protection, social dialogue, fundamental principles and rights at work and policy coherence.

Sri Lanka strongly believes decent work to be a key means of improving the lives of its citizens. Under the Mahinda Chinthana and Ten-year Development Framework – Vision for the future – which encapsulates the political will, dedication and commitment of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka, to uplift the lives of all Sri Lankan people, every possible effort is being taken by the Government, through policy and strategy formulation and programme implementation, to ensure inclusive growth and to achieve the above objective.

Sri Lanka, over the years, has undertaken several initiatives to address issues with regard to unemployment, underemployment, poverty, inequality and social justice by ways of formulating an appropriate legal and policy framework, capacity building, occupational training and skills development, and promoting entrepreneurship.

The comprehensive National Human Resource and Employment Policy for Sri Lanka was formulated as an overarching umbrella framework through an extensive tripartite consultative process.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka has developed the National Policy and Plan of Action for Decent Work. This policy provides comprehensive guidelines for creating employment opportunities and ensuring the quality of work.

In addition, Sri Lanka has formulated the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, which aims at

analyzing the problem, developing responses determining implementation, and coordinating and monitoring results.

Sri Lanka has also formulated the National Labour Migration Policy, based on the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, which I am proud to note is a pioneering accomplishment in the South Asia region. This policy articulates state commitment to ensure a skilled and safe migration that is in compliance with the principles of good governance and related international Conventions.

Sri Lanka made a commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016, and a roadmap was developed. Consequently, amendments were made to the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act No. 47 of 1956. Furthermore, regulations were introduced to prohibit employing persons below 18 years in 51 occupations identified as hazardous.

Yet another important measure taken by Sri Lanka with respect to rights at work is the amendment made to the Industrial Disputes Act No. 43 of 1950, effective from June 2011, with regard to the increase in fines for unfair labour practices.

The formulation of the National Policy on HIV and AIDS for the World of Work in Sri Lanka was another landmark achievement in Sri Lanka's commitment towards the development of a healthy workforce.

The Government of Sri Lanka acknowledges and appreciates the support and cooperation extended by the ILO in all of the above initiatives, which were implemented through a tripartite consultative process.

I am also happy to observe that there has been a significant decline in the number of strikes and industrial disputes that have taken place in Sri Lanka. This is mainly due to the implementation of continuous programmes on social dialogue and workplace cooperation. Social protection floor initiatives, the formulation of the new Occupational and Safety Framework Act and the establishment of an Employment Injury Insurance Scheme, are other important initiatives that are being considered.

The realization of decent work objectives is not an easy task. But working towards these noble goals is an urgent task in today's world. We should therefore take steps to ensure inclusive development by utilizing innovative ideas and all possible measures, through a collective decision-making process.

Sri Lanka is firmly of the view that lasting solutions to global challenges cannot be found without women's active participation in decision-making at all levels. They are the agents of change and development. Investing in women therefore has a vital effect on both the elimination of poverty and discrimination.

I wish to place on record Sri Lanka's deep appreciation of the contribution made by Mr Juan Somavia, the outgoing Director-General of the ILO, in safeguarding the well-being of peoples in ILO member States. We thank Mr Somavia for his yeoman service.

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I also congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election to the post of Director-General of the ILO and wish him every success in his endeavours. I also assure Mr Ryder of the full and continuous support and cooperation of the Government of Sri Lanka in work related to the ILO in the future.

Original Arabic: Mr EZZAOUIA (Minister of Social Affairs, Tunisia)

Allow me to begin my statement by extending my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the Director-General of the ILO. We wish him every success in the management of this venerable Organization.

I would also like to congratulate Mr Albuquerque de Castro on his election as President of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would also like to extend my deep gratitude to Mr Juan Somavia for his valuable efforts and achievements during his mandate. This was reflected in the important subjects dealt with in the Director-General's Reports submitted to different sessions of the International Labour Conference during his term of office, enshrining decent work with its various elements as the best means to address crises and to reduce poverty in order to ensure comprehensive development in the context of a fair globalization.

The agenda of this current session includes the adoption of an autonomous Recommendation on the social protection floor, which, after its adoption by the Conference, will undoubtedly guide member States, through its guidelines and procedures, towards building a social protection floor within a social dialogue framework, tailored to the level of development of each country. The aim is to provide social coverage, minimum wages and access to basic services to all citizens.

The Government of Tunisia looks forward to receiving technical assistance from the ILO in order to develop an appropriate mechanism for coverage of the unemployed and to combat poverty, funded in part by the State, and by workers' and employers' organizations.

This year, the Conference is discussing an extremely important subject in view of its impact on the stability of societies: the youth employment crisis. The report prepared by the Office on the subject mentions that youth unemployment figures have reached unprecedented levels: four out of ten young people are unemployed. The report states further that the surge of youth-led protest movements, clamouring for jobs, dignity and social justice was the main cause behind the revolutions and the overthrow of dictatorships that swept across the Arab Spring countries.

Youth employment constitutes one of the major challenges confronting the Government of Tunisia. In the first three months of 2012, unemployment reached 35.6 per cent among young persons in the 15–29 age group, affecting university graduates in particular.

At the end of this month, a national conference on employment will be held in collaboration with the ILO, with the participation of government institutions, workers' and employers' organizations and civil society. The conference is aimed at evaluating the results of employment programmes, including mechanisms of self-employment; identifying problems; and providing solutions, proposals and perspectives for the formulation of an employment policy which responds to the ambitions of young people and the expectations of institutions.

Tunisia attaches particular importance to international labour standards, as reflected in the number of ratifications of international labour Conventions, which have reached 58, including the eight funda-

mental Conventions related to fundamental rights at work.

After the revolution, interest in these standards grew. We have therefore decided, after consultations with employers' and workers' organizations, to ratify the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), both of which are considered to complement the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). We also decided to ratify one of the governance Conventions, the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).

To ensure social dialogue between the Government, the Tunisian General Labour Union and the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and

Handicrafts, the Government organized a tripartite workshop in May 2012, with the active collaboration of the ILO, and the support of the Belgian Government, in order to launch a project on the promotion of social dialogue aimed at the formulation of a social contract to be observed by all three social partners, by providing suitable conditions which would ensure the realization of social and economic reforms, in response to the aims of the revolution and to the expectations of the Tunisian people.

This social contract constitutes a step towards the formulation of a social charter, in which political parties, occupational associations and civil organizations will all participate. This social contract is expected to be signed on the second anniversary of the Tunisian Revolution, to be celebrated on 14 January 2013.

(The Conference adjourned at 3.00 p.m.)

Tenth sitting

Friday, 8 June 2012, 3.45 p.m.

Presidents: Mr Matthey and Mr Sukayri

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

Original French: The PRESIDENT

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

Original Spanish: Mr LUNA SÁNCHEZ (*Government, Colombia*)

On behalf of the Government of Colombia, I would like to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on being elected Director-General and to thank Mr Juan Somavia for the willingness he has shown, during his tenure, to assist my Government in strengthening labour relations in Colombia.

Seven months ago, after nine years, the Colombian Government established the Ministry of Labour, thereby sending a strong signal to social partners in the worlds of work and business, to other governments and international agencies, and especially to the ILO. The new Ministry of Labour embodies the will of the Government, headed by President Juan Manuel Santos and the Minister of Labour, Mr Rafael Pardo, to give maximum priority to tripartite channels for social dialogue, the fight against violence and impunity, full guarantees for freedom of association, job creation, and strengthening the inspection and monitoring system.

But the changes that Colombia has seen in labour matters go far beyond the creation of a Ministry. Murders of trade unionists, which are all regrettable and reproachable, have fallen by 85 per cent; 299,000 companies have bought into our most recent vocational training policy; 395,000 jobs have been created for young people under 28; and we have strengthened tripartite social dialogue and introduced progressive labour standards that clearly tackle trade union discrimination.

In terms of social dialogue, the Dialogue Commission on Wage and Labour Policies is working actively, as the country's principal forum for dialogue. In 2011, the Commission met 12 times and, for the first time in five years, reached consensus on an increase in the minimum wage of 5.8 per cent for 2012. The sectoral committee for the public sector was able to issue Decree No. 1092 of 2012, regulating bargaining between unions and workers in the public sector and public bodies. The Inter-

institutional Committee on Human Rights has initiated an open dialogue on the means of investigating crimes against trade unionists, while in the Special Committee on the Handling of Conflicts referred to the ILO (CETCOIT), solutions to problems are being sought, with 23 agreements reached in recent weeks.

With respect to the fight against impunity and violence, violence against trade unionists has reduced considerably in recent years. According to a study by the Attorney General for the period 2000–11, 17.7 per cent of killings of unionists were motivated by the victim's ILO and trade union activities, with external motives being far more common. Nevertheless, the Government will continue its tireless efforts to eradicate this scourge completely, as it is totally unacceptable in any form. To this end, we have fine-tuned protection schemes for groups of union members. Coverage under the protection programme has been extended – 1,400 unionists are now protected – and, as a result of tripartite agreement, the Attorney General has set up a specific unit to deal with crimes against union members. As proof of this, and to reaffirm our commitment in this regard, the Attorney General, Mr Eduardo Montealegre, is attending the Conference with us.

These efforts have been significant and have resulted in valuable achievements. Before 2002, there had only been two convictions for crimes against unionists. Today, the figure stands at 425 convictions, with 530 people found guilty. In the field of freedom of association, the Colombian State is working hard to penalize those who conclude collective pacts granting better conditions, and at the same time the Colombian Government is working to modernize current legislation and, of course, to improve the inspection and monitoring system.

This is our recent history. It includes unprecedented achievements that yield important lessons for the future, and it demonstrates our commitment to the ILO. Of course, our history presents immense challenges, which the Government intends to tackle on the basis of social dialogue and international co-operation.

Mr MADADA KYEBAKOZE (*Minister of State for Elderly and Persons with Disability, Uganda*)

On behalf of the Ugandan delegation, I wish to add my voice to those who have already congratulated the President on his election and, most important, to thank him for his guidance to this great as-

sembly. I further applaud the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, and the entire International Labour Organization for continuing to defend social justice and fair globalization as the key drivers of change in the world of work. I salute Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General elect, for attaining this highest office of the ILO.

Today, the world is facing the most urgent challenges: these are the challenges of youth unemployment. According to the report by the ILO entitled *Global Employment Trends 2012: Preventing a deeper jobs crisis*, the world faces the challenge of creating 600 million jobs over the next decade. The world youth unemployment situation calls for a new dimension in macroeconomic policy frameworks to ensure high-quality job creation and decent work, as central targets for macroeconomic policies.

In sub-Saharan Africa, more young people face an economic need to work for an income, in an environment marked by widespread poverty and lack of social protection. While the youth labour force in sub-Saharan Africa has grown by 29.8 per cent in the last ten years, youth unemployment has grown by 34.2 per cent in the region.

In Uganda, the economy has been growing at an average rate of 7 per cent per annum over the last ten years; however, the rate of economic growth does not match the pace of job creation. To make matters worse, the high growth rate of the population and, consequently, the labour force, estimated at 13.4 million in the years 2009–10, has aggravated both the annual employment problem and unemployment, particularly among young people. 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 is employed in the formal sector, generating sustainable decent employment for all has been a great challenge and a big dream for the country.

What has Uganda done to address this challenge?

The Government of Uganda has taken new strides to create an enabling environment for job creation, decent employment opportunities and human capital development through a five-year national development plan 2010 and the development of a national employment policy for Uganda, with the theme “Increasing decent employment opportunities and labour productivity for socio-economic transformation”.

In addition to this, to address the critical challenge of youth unemployment, the Government has established a youth venture capital fund worth US\$18 million. The fund is complemented with entrepreneurship training to enable young people to gain skills so as to seize new opportunities in the labour market for gainful employment and establishing small enterprises.

Also, recognizing that agriculture provides the livelihood of 80 per cent of the population, the Government, through the programme for the modernization of agriculture, is targeting small-scale agricultural farmers in rural areas to raise productivity, employability and income. Young people are part of the target group.

With regard to social protection, in 2011 Uganda launched a social protection programme targeting vulnerable households and older persons, which has reached 12,300 beneficiaries. The programme provides regular cash transfers to beneficiaries every month to improve their uptake of health services, nutrition, education and scholastic materials. It is

envisaged that this pilot will transform into a national programme on social protection.

Turning to policy development, Uganda stresses, through the President, that ILO technical support is needed to promote social protection policies, with particular emphasis on the informal sector.

The Government of Uganda is also part of the Decent Work Agenda for Africa. The first phase of the Uganda Decent Work Country Programme ended in July 2010 and the second phase has been developed. My delegation proposes that Decent Work Country Programmes in Africa be harmonized to enable the consolidation of experiences, innovativeness and sharing of good practices within the region.

In conclusion, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the ILO for its technical and financial support to various different programmes. I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Uganda to the ILO's objectives, the principles and foundations for the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, and the Decent Work Agenda, as a sure way of providing a human face to the capitalist development model, which is very hostile to the poor.

Mr PANYANOUVONG (*Employer, Lao People's Democratic Republic*)

On behalf of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as an Employer representative, I am very proud to have the opportunity to attend the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has promoted and contributed to employment, which has resulted in local and foreign investment in education funds and training in different sectors, such as electricity, irrigation and industry. In addition, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been funding technical training in order to provide young people with the skills required to work in several sectors, particularly the industrial and service sectors. These contributions promote youth employment in urban and rural areas.

In order to improve working conditions in different business units, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and employers have introduced social security by providing funding for the implementation of the social security regulations. The business units have signed special agreements on health insurance for workers, which improves their livelihoods. The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has an important role to play in business development and we actively contribute to all business units that target business development. We also encourage businesses to participate in their social responsibilities, especially by creating more job opportunities for young people. In addition, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been encouraging the informal business sector to take the necessary steps to become incorporated in the formal business system in order to contribute to skills development and vocational training.

The domestic and international investment promotion policies of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has facilitated business conditions that are conducive to employment creation in rural areas. These policies and conditions should reduce labour

migration from rural to urban areas, by creating decent work in rural areas. With the support of the International Labour Organization, the Government and its social partners are taking steps to implement the Decent Work Agenda. Strengthening tripartite partnership in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a key priority.

Lao employers will continue coordinating and co-operating with the Government to implement the Decent Work Agenda as well as specific projects concerning child labour, occupational safety and health, labour migration and the promotion of female workers in the business sector in order to raise their profile in society.

The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry would like to thank the International Labour Organization for the technical assistance it has provided to our country. We hope that other organizations working in the labour sector will continue their support of organizations representing Lao workers.

On behalf of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, representing employers, I commend the achievements of the International Labour Organization. I wish everyone a successful 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

Original Arabic: Mr KHIAT (Government, Algeria)

At the outset, allow me to join the previous speakers in extending my warm congratulations to the President on his election to preside over this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep thanks and appreciation to Mr Juan Somavia for his efforts deployed during his mandate as head of the ILO. It was thanks to his commitment and devotion that our Organization succeeded in making significant progress with the principles it embodies, making the ILO a key partner within the UN family, and among other international organizations and bodies.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder on his election as Director-General of the International Labour Office. We wish him all the success in his functions.

The world is currently witnessing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis. It is a crisis whose consequences weigh heavily on the future of nations, spreading everywhere in the world.

We would like to welcome here the effective and full participation of the ILO in its efforts to find the best means to reduce the impact of the crisis, and to activate economies so as to restore job-rich growth by focusing on the promotion of decent work and social protection for all, especially in a world which exceeded 7 billion inhabitants in 2011, according to the available information.

Thus, the placing of the two above items on the agenda of this Session attests to the continued interest shown by our Organization in the issue of employment, especially youth employment, and the need for a social protection floor which would provide the conditions for a decent living for all citizens.

The discussions which will take place within this Committee will enable us to draw lessons from recent experiences aimed at highlighting its strengths and weaknesses, and finding solutions to resolve any problems.

Algeria, 70 per cent of whose population is made up of young people, realized early on the need to establish mechanisms to assert the job integration of young people especially newcomers to the labour market. Thus, since the early nineties, mechanisms were set in place and developed according to the availability of resources, on the one hand, while shortcomings on the ground were rectified, on the other hand.

Thus, in 2008, our Government approved an action plan aimed at combating unemployment and creating jobs. This plan is based on adopting an economic approach to combating unemployment. This is done through encouraging investment, which generates jobs; developing human resources through the promotion of training; and modernizing the operation of the labour market by reforming the public employment service and improving its performance.

The action plan also encourages the spirit of entrepreneurship among young people. It sets up a new body to support the professional integration of young first-time jobseekers, giving priority to permanent integration in the productive economic sector.

With respect to social protection, I would like to reiterate that the Algerian social security system covers most risks specified in the international labour Conventions, and in particular health insurance; disability; maternity; occupational accidents; occupational disease; and retirement.

Throughout its history, the social security system has gone through developments and reforms aimed at responding to the expectations of Algerian society. Some of these expectations were reflected in the principle of national solidarity, which is considered to be an important factor in the social policy of the State.

For its part, the social protection system in Algeria also made a significant contribution in distributing income between the active population and non-active population. Consequently, it is considered to be a means for social equity, whose importance may be gauged through the level of protection to be provided to the majority of the population.

The global events which the world is witnessing today call for additional efforts to address the challenges of the economic crisis and its negative impact on the social front. Social peace cannot be realized except through constructive dialogue, which would in turn create the right environment for investment, and consequently, the growth of the economy. This would help stabilize labour relations; safeguard jobs; and promote social protection.

We cannot fail to mention the Palestinian workers, who are still being prevented from getting to their workplaces, or face other forms of restrictions of movement.

We would like to express our appreciation to the ILO for its valuable efforts to help Palestinian workers and employers.

We reiterate our call to the international community to assume its responsibility in regard to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian workers so as to enable them to earn a livelihood from their work. We appeal to the United Nations to take on its responsibility in regard to protection of the isolated Palestinian people, and guarantee the rights of their workers so as to guarantee their right to work and to a decent living.

Allow me to begin my speech by congratulating the President of the Conference, the Officers and the representatives of the regional groups on their election, which reflects our confidence in their efforts and capacity in helping this Conference achieve its aims.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General of the ILO for their valuable efforts exerted, which enabled the Organization to realize new achievements and activities in the pursuit of its objectives.

The agenda of this year's Conference deals with important topics related to fundamental principles and rights of workers at work, social protection and the youth employment crisis, which became a global issue with human, social and economic dimensions, set within the context of development challenges. This, in turn, requires the deployment of joint efforts so as to address these challenges and find solutions to meet them.

Social protection constitutes the basis for comprehensive development, which provides education, training, employment, medical care, maternity protection and childcare, in addition to all the basic living requirements for all citizens in society, of different levels and age groups. These include providing social assistance to jobseekers, and covering the costs of their education, training, employment and funding for business start-ups for self-employment.

With respect to fundamental principles and rights at work, the Sultanate of Oman has ratified a number of fundamental international labour Conventions related to forced labour and the abolition thereof; minimum age of admission to employment; and the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour. It is also in the process of ratifying the Convention which relates to the right to organize and collective bargaining, in the context of the development achieved in labour relations since the completion of the tripartite structure of the social partners, through the establishment of the General Federation of Workers of the Sultanate of Oman, and through the setting up of 151 trade unions representing workers employed in companies in different activities and economic sectors. Moreover, a committee for social dialogue comprising the three social partners was set up, with the aim of achieving stability in labour relations. The Sultanate also pays special attention to realizing decent work through its collaboration with the ILO in the implementation of a number of activities, including the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2010, aimed at developing the practical and technical capacities of the social partners with a view to developing the labour system and its services.

The Sultanate of Oman emphasizes once again the need for all countries to deploy their efforts so as to address the challenges of development and employment through increasing investment in human capital, as the development of human resources constitutes the foundation of sustainable development. Furthermore, Oman pays particular attention to doubling investment so as to promote economic development targeted at providing job opportunities to youth. It endeavours continuously to develop education at every stage, as well as expanding technical education and vocational training, with a spe-

cific focus on targeting education and training at work. It seeks to promote linkages between educational institutions and the private sector for the purpose of providing young people with vocational, scientific and technical training to meet the need for skills on the labour market, and of providing job training to young jobseekers without professional qualifications to integrate them in the labour market, as young persons are the backbone of development key to its sustainability.

Thus, we all have a responsibility to work together to address this challenge, by providing young people with the vocational and scientific training they need for their integration in the labour market, and with appropriate coaching to ensure their contribution to the ongoing efforts of construction and development in their countries.

Original French: Ms SABO (Minister of the Public Services and Labour, Niger)

Allow me to begin by joining with previous speakers in conveying to the President, on behalf of our delegation from Niger, and on my behalf, my warmest congratulations on his election to preside over the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference.

I must also, in this exceptional year in the history of our Organization, pay a well-deserved tribute to a leader without equal, a great advocate of labour rights, Mr Juan Somavia, whose great legacy leaves nobody indifferent in the world of work.

The Decent Work Agenda for which he was responsible, and which he is bequeathing to us today, is – and will remain, for a long time in our countries – the most effective means of creating wealth and consequently ensuring the development and self-fulfilment of men and women throughout the world.

Contrary to tradition, the Director-General has, at this extraordinary session, submitted to us a Report, *ILO programme implementation 2010–11*, which provides us with a basis for an assessment of the work carried out during the past biennium, as has already been done by the Governing Body.

I will not refer here to the thematic reports he submitted from 1999 to 2011; however, allow me to say that during the course of his three terms of office, he ensured that the ILO became an institution which, by virtue of its ability to adapt to changing times, evolved remarkably among the leading institutions in today's world. And we congratulate him for this.

I should like now to refer to Mr Guy Ryder, the incoming Director-General, elected by the Governing Body. My delegation and I noted with interest his commitment to pursuing, from the very beginning of his mandate, the objective of social justice for which we all strive in this Organization. So while expressing our solidarity and support, the Delegation of Niger, through me, would like to congratulate him and wish him every success and congratulations in his new role.

As a Member of the ILO since 1961, my country, Niger, is proud today, thanks to its involvement in various ILO activities, to be promoting social sustainability among its people in a responsible and objective way.

We have understood that liberalism has its limits and that a new form of global governments is necessary. That is why we did not hesitate in signing up to the ILO Decent Work Agenda. This is an objective that will guarantee growth, itself necessary to

prevent inequalities, and ensure true social progress – to which all our peoples aspire.

While restating our commitment to this ILO approach, allow me, by way of illustration, to give you some information with regard to steps taken by my country to promote the Decent Work Agenda, in keeping with the programme to stimulate the economy launched by our President, Mr Issoufou Mahamadou, in the form of investments projects for 2011–14. These include: the recruitment to the public service of 536 doctors, 970 nurses and midwives, 3,900 teachers, 5,500 primary education workers and 250 other agents spread over a number of ministerial departments; the earmarking of 75 billion CFA francs for agriculture and animal husbandry, 240 billion CFA francs for industrial development, and 29 billion CFA francs for water supplies, both urban and rural; an increase in public service pay and for auxiliaries in the public sector, as well as those working in the para-State and private sectors; an increase in pensions; the convening in Niamey, together with the organization for the promotion of the French language, an international forum on youth employment as its contribution to the transition towards a fair and environmentally-aware economy; and the adoption of social protection policies to extend coverage of all social groups.

All the technical items on the agenda of this session are of great interest to us because they are components that will assist with the implementation of this vision.

More particularly, we welcome the inclusion on an agenda item on the consideration and adoption of a Recommendation on the social protection floor. The findings of the Committee set up for this purpose will make it important to our decent work programmes.

Before I conclude, I would like to restate my country's wish, now that we are entering a new era of Renaissance, to cooperate more actively with the ILO, more particularly with regard to: social dialogue; the fight against child labour; the promotion of employment and vocational training; social protection; and the strengthening of the capacity building of the administration and labour inspection services.

Original Arabic: Ms BOUCHAMAOU (Employer, Tunisia)

On my own behalf and that of the Tunisian employers, I would like to congratulate the President and the other Officers on their election at this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I wish them every success in their work.

I would also like to thank Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, for his Report entitled *ILO programme implementation 2010–11*, and the appendix, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*.

We are currently undergoing a period of transition in Tunisia, in which we are striving to create tripartite labour relations based on the goals of equitable development and youth employment creation in order to put the economic indicators back on track, particularly growth and competitiveness. Last month, we launched a tripartite programme to revive social dialogue and conclude a social pact, with the ILO's help, for which we are grateful.

Our aim, under this programme, is to create lasting social peace, employment relationships based on dialogue, understanding and support for decent work, and to promote economic development.

Our employers' organization, the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Crafts, more particularly its social affairs committee, has drawn up a programme for dialogue and negotiation with our partners, with a view to finding a new model for labour relations that strikes a balance between the following factors: better use of human resources and employment protection, increased enterprise competitiveness, revised social protection systems, including social security and health insurance, and better education and training systems that meet the needs of businesses and the economy. It is an ambitious programme that includes other elements and will be implemented up to 2020.

The establishment of social protection floors for social justice and a fair globalization is an invitation to dialogue and discussion to find lasting solutions that enable us to put in place a system for retirement, health insurance and protection against occupational hazards that protects people and guarantees the conditions necessary for a decent life. This system should also guarantee the quality of employment without burdening businesses with additional costs, streamline benefits and promote the sense of social solidarity between the different sectors of society and the generations. This should be achieved within the framework of a minimum social protection threshold covering the largest number of workers and encompassing people working in the informal and parallel trade sectors. These sectors are marked by social precariousness and pose a threat to the formal sector and the principles of fair competition and a danger to consumers.

Youth employment is one of our main concerns, and it requires extensive mobilization and in-depth dialogue on the demographic, economic and social dimensions of the issue. Such dialogue should result in a common understanding of the problems and the development of a clear strategy formulated through the efforts of all the national partners.

Vocational training, capacity building and their adaptation to the needs of the economy and businesses, promotion of entrepreneurship and encouragement of investment are some of the absolute prerequisites for the success of this strategy. This is what we shall be saying at the national employment conference to be held in Tunisia at the end of the month.

We espouse peace and freedom and hope that all the world's countries and peoples will be able to enjoy them both, especially the Palestinian people, whom we support in their efforts and whose suffering is a source of concern to us. We call upon the international community to support the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle to live in peace, freedom and sovereignty.

Mr SPRIGGS (Government, United States)

I am pleased to represent the United States Government at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. On behalf of Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, let me extend my congratulations to our newly-elected Director-General, Guy Ryder, and offer a very warm thank you to Director-General Juan Somavia for his leadership and hard work on behalf of this Organization.

I would like to use this opportunity to offer our view on some of the issues that we hope the ILO will consider over the next few years.

The fundamental reality that we will have to confront in the near future is the continued uncertain

state of the global economy. While the economic recovery continues, and many countries have posted significant growth records, weak demand remains a major obstacle to full global recovery.

For far too many of the world's workers, the economic realities are harsh. Job recovery has not kept pace with economic and financial improvements. Workers in many countries are being laid off; long-term unemployment is rife; and young people are facing greater difficulties than ever in finding employment. The labour share of GDP continues to decrease in developed countries.

Many developed countries are still seeking to restore jobs lost in the recession and ensure good jobs for all, while in the developing world, efforts continue to create new jobs and lift people from a poverty that in many countries is at once profound and pervasive. Even the strong growth rates enjoyed by many developing countries are insufficient to keep pace with the constantly mounting needs of these countries.

The ILO must play a lead role in addressing these daunting challenges. First and foremost, we must ensure that fundamental worker protections and international labour standards are not diminished in the name of cost savings and economy. Standards and their application are our mission and our cause. The ILO alone has the moral authority and the supervisory machinery that informs the world what is right and what is wrong in the world of work. It is up to us – governments, business and workers – to protect the legal firmament that safeguards workers worldwide and support and respect, not undermine, the ILO in this role. We must be vigilant in ensuring that workers who are increasingly desperate to feed their families do not fall victim to abuses of the labour standards this Organization has devoted a century to developing.

The most important tool for implementing labour law and ensuring that workplaces are compliant with labour standards is labour inspection, and this is an area where much of the world needs significantly upgraded capabilities. Strong labour inspectorates are the most important source of protection available to workers, and in too many countries the inspection function has not kept pace with the needs of workers. It is critical that the ILO help those countries requiring assistance, both by helping to build up the capabilities of ministries and sponsoring programmes like the Better Work Programme that can monitor workers' rights pending the development of fully-functioning inspection systems.

The ILO must also deal with the reality that the majority of the world's working population work outside the employment relationship that has traditionally linked employers and workers.

In many developing countries, over 90 per cent of the population works in what is loosely called the informal economy. Millions of workers serve in seasonal, migrant or temporary jobs and work without contracts, without protection and without any guarantee that they will have a job the next day.

In developed countries, too, an increasing number of workers work outside the traditional employment relationship. Because this situation is a reality for most of the world's workers, we must have a clear and informed understanding of the causes and implications of this predicament and that we must prioritize developing a strategy to address this endemic problem.

In the coming years, as we seek to evaluate, reform and establish priorities, there are many ongoing programmes that should be continued. In our efforts we must remain true to our core purpose and to the fundamental principles that underlie this Organization, using them to guide us in addressing the emerging issues that affect real workers in today's real world.

Original Spanish: Mr DOZ (Worker, Spain)

First of all, I would like to thank Juan Somavia for the excellent work that has been done under the head of the ILO and to congratulate Guy Ryder on his election. We wish him success in promoting labour and union rights and promoting decent work.

A highly unusual occurrence has disturbed this Conference: the veto of the Employers' delegation to examine reports of violations of the right to strike. We would like to draw to the attention of all ILO Members that this position is untenable. It is a negation of the fundamental principles of its functioning and blocks its most important means of action.

After more than four years of economic crisis and two years of austerity policies and cuts, as well as the undermining of social and labour rights, the economic and social situation in Spain is extremely worrying. We are moving towards 6 million unemployed, 25 per cent of the active population, and youth unemployment already exceeds 50 per cent.

The current Government has been extreme in the application of the aforementioned policies, which have been applied to varying degrees in all European Union countries under the dictate of the German Government. The result is total failure. Not only have they failed to achieve any of their stated objectives, but the situation is far worse than it was in May 2010. The risk premium of the Spanish debt is 3.5 times higher than it was before these policies were applied. We have moved from recovery to a new recession and the objectives to reduce the deficit cannot be reached despite the brutal budgetary adjustments.

This was only to be expected when the factors comprising internal demand are wilfully depressed and no stimulation measures for the economy or employment are taken. The ideological dogmatism of those who govern Spain and Europe is the only explanation for such perseverance in this mistake.

The second major mistake is to think that the depressive effect of the severe and simultaneous decline in consumption and investment can be offset by reduced wages and labour rights in order to gain competitiveness and confidence in the markets. As could be expected, what is actually happening is the opposite: there is more unemployment, more recession, more distrust. Very recent studies by the IMF show that there is no correlation between job creation and labour reform.

The consequences are devastating. Other than those I have mentioned, we have seen a sharp increase in poverty and social inequality, and the substantial deterioration of public services and social protection systems.

The majority view in our societies is that governments are applying policies as misguided as they are unfair. This has the dangerous effect of undermining the legitimacy of European democratic institutions. How is it possible that the Council, Commission and the Central Bank, institutions which are not elected by citizens, take it upon themselves to

impose or propose contravening national laws and constitutions, ILO Conventions, collective agreements and social dialogue agreements?

When this occurs, social dialogue and collective bargaining must be sacrificed. This is what is happening today in Spain. Until recently, it was correctly cited as an example of fruitful social dialogue. We trade unionists have amply shown our willingness and ability to negotiate and to reach agreements with employers. This is no longer the case in Spain.

Worse yet, the biggest labour reform in our democratic history has been approved by decree without any consultation of the social partners. This was after we signed an agreement with employers which was then forgotten and contravened by the Government. It was an agreement on employment, collective bargaining and wages. The objectives of this reform are to facilitate lay-offs, weaken collective bargaining, and enable employers to unilaterally change working conditions.

That is why, for the first time in Spain, the CCOO and the UGT have each submitted complaints against the Government of Spain to the ILO under the Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154).

Spanish trade unionism is fighting by every means, suggesting alternatives in Spain and in Europe. We will continue to do so and fight to reintroduce social dialogue and collective bargaining.

Despite what has happened, we believe that it is necessary for “more Europe”, but a different Europe. We need to recast Europe on the basis of a new social contract and the profound democratization of each and every institution. It is Europe which is producing these devastating effects, undermining the fairest social model which existed in the world.

Original Arabic: Mr HASSAN (Minister of Manpower and Migration, Egypt)

It is my pleasure to participate in and discuss, on behalf of the Government of Egypt, the work of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, which has been called to debate the central issues that represent a challenge to development, both for governments and social partners.

Doubtless you will recall the wondrous spectacle that we witnessed over a year ago – the Arab Spring which burst forth in Egypt and, prior to that, in Tunisia. It augurs well for the futures of millions of people, and especially for young people who have been deprived of decent work or adequate social security coverage to ensure their security and stability. I would like to take this opportunity to talk to you about some developments which have taken place in the world of work in Egypt.

Firstly, the Revolution of 25 January 2011 has opened up a new era for democracy in Egypt and a transition towards democracy based on stages endorsed by the population through the Referendum of March 2011. The elections which began in November 2011 are part of the initial measures.

Secondly, two weeks ago Egypt concluded its first stage of the presidential elections. The second stage will take place in a week's time to elect a new president who will lead the nation at this extremely

critical stage in Egypt's history. We firmly believe that the creation of democratic institutions is a cornerstone in the process of democratic transformation in Egypt, which will enable us to ensure that all the sectors and institutions in society, including our trade unions and employers' associations, participate in this process.

Thirdly, the Revolution of 25 January 2011 has paved the way for public freedom, which has naturally manifested itself in expanded trade union freedoms. It is this factor that pushed the Government, less than two months after the revolution, in March 2011, to make a declaration of trade union freedoms in the presence of Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO.

In Egypt we are embarking on a new era of trade union freedoms; we have witnessed the establishment of new workers' unions which are composed of 798 trade union committees, 48 general trade unions and 15 general confederations, in addition to the existing unions. Moreover, we have seen the start of a serious social dialogue in which tripartite partners have taken part to elaborate a new law on trade unions with the help of the Organization. The draft is being debated at present, with a view to its adoption by the Egyptian Parliament.

I would also like to say that Egypt aims to promulgate this law and protect the new trade union movement for strictly national reasons.

We are also bound by the Conventions which we have ratified, including the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87).

Our objective is to create a propitious environment for the development of this new initiative, which is based on applying freedom of association in work sectors and in employers' organizations. The Government is encouraging the social partners in Egypt to use social dialogue, as an effective mechanism by which to attain a consensus, and to come up with clear solutions to issues related to work and workers. We hope that we will receive assistance from the ILO in this task.

The current session of the Conference is focusing on the most serious issues for all developing countries, in particular youth unemployment, which represents a new challenge that cannot be overcome through the mechanisms in place. In Egypt, we are trying to gear employment programmes towards young people, to help them find decent work. However, there are limits to our financial resources, given the scarcity of foreign direct investment and the priorities in social spending, which means that we will not be able to achieve these objectives over a short period of time. Nevertheless, and in spite of the unfavourable regional and international conditions, a number of positive indices show that there has been a slight improvement. Indeed, economic growth in Egypt has, for the most part, risen during the past year, attaining a growth of 2 per cent as opposed to 1.8 per cent last year. New foreign direct investment worth 2.3 billion dollars was secured in the first quarter of 2012. Moreover, the inflation rate has gone down from last year's figure of 11.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent this year.

The Egyptian economy is preparing for the next stage of growth that will come after political stability has been established, which will be soon.

Egypt supports the proposed Recommendation on national social protection floors, which is in line with the principles of social justice represented by

our revolution. Unfortunately, about 70 or even 80 per cent of the world's population is still deprived of this kind of protection, which should ensure a decent life for them and contribute to growth. That is why I wish this Conference every success.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for his role in leading the Organization. I also extend my congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General-elect, and wish him every possible success at the helm of the ILO.

Original French: Mr RAMADAN (Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Central African Republic)

I would like to thank the Swiss people for their renowned hospitality and, on behalf of my delegation, I convey my hearty congratulations to the President of the Conference and to the other Officers on their election. My congratulations also go to the new Director-General elected by the Governing Body of the ILO, Mr Ryder. I would like to take this opportunity to address a well-deserved tribute to Mr Juan Somavia, for the skill and expertise that he has put to the benefit of the ILO. There is no need to remind you of the commitment displayed by Mr Somavia, who has worked tirelessly to ensure that the ILO remains faithful to its founding ideals and values, particularly by establishing the concept of decent work. I would like to convey to him the warm congratulations of the senior authorities of the Central African Republic.

Our Conference is being held in a global context shaped by the international crisis and, in particular by debt, which, far from being behind us, leaves a trail of poverty and violence. Today's world faces a rise in inequality, unemployment, precarious work and a constant upsurge in social movements. Moreover, the social protection situation in many countries continues to deteriorate, thus aggravating the poverty of a number of populations.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the Governing Body and the International Labour Office for the appropriate and judicious choice of agenda items for this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, namely the social protection floor, the youth employment crisis and fundamental principles and rights at work.

My country, the Central African Republic, feels the devastating effects of the crisis on a daily basis and is therefore delighted to be involved in these discussions and to share experiences on this important subject with other countries. With the support of our development partners, my Government is sparing no effort to find the necessary means to mitigate the impact of the crisis on our population and to preserve peace and social cohesion.

In political and socio-economic terms, the Government of the Central African Republic has taken a number of measures to establish decent work as a strategic approach within its economic and social development, believing that this approach remains the safest path towards the progressive and sustainable elimination of poverty.

The Government of my country is more aware than ever of the need to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies, particularly with respect to youth employment, and the need to establish a real social protection system available to all, in line with the fundamental principles and rights at work.

This can be seen in the strategy document on the reduction of poverty among young people, which focuses on the development of human capital as a cross-cutting aspect of all socio-economic development policies in my country, taking into account the issues of employment and social protection. Furthermore, in his general policy statement, His Excellency the Prime Minister and Head of Government clearly and solemnly expressed his desire to improve the skills and qualifications of young people to enable them to be fully integrated into production. He went one step further to indicate that we will do all we can to ensure that there is an efficient employment market contributing to growth and poverty reduction, through the implementation a proactive strategy to create new employment opportunities for the poorest members of our society.

In terms of social security, he called on the Government to balance deficit sectors and ensure that social security is extended to the most vulnerable in the rural and informal sectors. In view of his policy guidelines, the Ministry of Labour, in partnership with the International Labour Organization and other United Nations agencies, implemented a large number of reforms, which have had remarkable results.

Without wishing to go into too much detail on this subject, I would like to mention a few significant achievements which have set the agenda for the socio-economic future of my country. Firstly, we have launched the process for the formulation of the Decent Work Country Programme; we have held a National Forum on Decent Work, and the draft National Social Protection Policy document has been approved.

These achievements, based on tripartism, fall under two priority areas of work. Firstly, increasing decent work opportunities for both sexes through capacity-building and promoting entrepreneurship; secondly, reforming and broadening the social protection system by building a social protection floor to guarantee basic social protection for all.

I would like to add that the National Forum on Decent Work brought together a whole range of different socio-economic and political standpoints and enabled us to identify job-rich sectors, problems and solutions relating to professional training, and to set priorities in terms of social protection.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that participative technical cooperation with the ILO and its subregional offices, through its different forms of support, have been essential in enabling us to address our concerns. I would therefore particularly like to thank the Country Office of the Central African Republic, which remains attentive to our needs and sometimes even takes the lead in helping us manage our work.

I wish us every success in our work and thank you for your kind attention.

Original Arabic: Mr ABASSI (Worker, Tunisia)

First of all I would like to congratulate Mr Alburquerque de Castro who has just been elected as President of this session of the International Labour Conference, and I also have to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as Director-General of the ILO. I would like to wish him every success in his new mission, expressing the wish that his mandate will bring about further advances for mankind towards granting freedoms and attaining peace and social justice. I would also like to take this opportunity

nity to express my deep appreciation to Mr Juan Somavia for his successes in making decent work a concrete reality in several regions of the world.

The Report of the Director-General of the ILO has given us a full assessment of the results achieved in 2010 and 2011 in the area of the four strategic objectives of the ILO Decent Work Agenda. The fact that 1,200,000 workers have benefited from the “Better Work” programme and “Women’s Entrepreneurship Development” programme, in addition to the invaluable support programme of the ILO for investment in infrastructure and the creation of 100,000 jobs around the world.

The events seen in the world today, especially in the Arab region, have confirmed three essential realities. The first reality is that the attainment of sustainable and equitable development, and respect for fundamental rights at work, are inseparable from democracy and individual and public freedoms.

The second reality is that the adoption of savage liberal policies and state withdrawal from economic and social areas can only lead to further poverty, marginalization and unemployment, which cause tensions and feelings of injustice and may lead to revolutions like the ones countries saw during the Arab Spring.

The third reality is that the attempt to solve the economic and financial crises through greater wage compression, austerity policies harmful to workers and the poor, and the reduction of social services are most unfortunate choices that can only lead to a decline in domestic demand and deepen the economic recession by driving more workers into unemployment.

The ILO and union movements throughout the world have thus constantly reaffirmed that overcoming these crises, achieving political and social stability, and renewed growth will not occur by putting more pressure on social expenditure, wage freezes and recourse to precarious work. On the contrary, decent work, improving the purchasing power of workers, widespread social security coverage, and combating poverty are the the appropriate way to bring about economic recovery and social justice and stability.

In this context, we hope that the dialogue on social protection at this Conference will lead to an international Convention that sets minimum floors for effective social protection, which will benefit the whole of the labour force and their families. We also propose that we add this Convention, after the necessary ratifications, to the list of fundamental Conventions contained in the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

My country, Tunisia, is currently going through profound transformation in society after the revolution which led to the overthrow of the dictatorship and an end to corruption. Social demands and claiming the right to freedom have been the catalyst for this revolution and hundreds and thousands of Tunisians who took to the streets risking death, arrest and violence.

You are aware that the Tunisian General Union of Labour (UGTT) played an essential role in organizing protests, managing demonstrations, developing slogans and the demands of the revolution until the fall of the regime. Our country has entered a phase of transition towards the rule of law and institutions guaranteeing freedoms, equality and social justice. It is the most crucial stage that a people may go through in their history. We do not want our revolu-

tion to be reversed and we will fight so that we do not suffer what other people have suffered when their revolutions were reversed. After sacrificing everything, those who had brought about revolution found themselves left empty-handed and even became the first victims of new forms of repression and tyranny. It is because of this that our organization is working with all the national democratic forces to complete the transition to democracy in Tunisia through the consecration of the principles of fairness and equality and the adoption of new laws.

While the Arab countries have been rising up against dictatorship and corruption, the Palestinian people still live under the yoke of occupation and suffer the economic, social and cultural consequences. The occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Syrian Golan, and Lebanese farms; the construction of colonies; the construction of the racial separation wall; the blockade of Gaza; and the presence of more than 10,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons are all practices that violate international law and United Nations resolutions. This makes Israel a rogue State not worthy of belonging to international institutions and organizations based on law, the principles of human rights, and people’s rights to freedom, dignity and self-determination.

I would like to take this opportunity, on my own behalf and that of workers in Tunisia, to pay tribute to the resistance of the Palestinian people and workers. I call on the ILO and the rest of the international community to put pressure on Israel for an immediate withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, the release of prisoners and the return of Palestinian refugees, with a view to building an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital.

I would also like to say that our Union rejects the false logic of those who are calling for delays in meeting social demands in terms of decent work, increased purchasing power and better social protection in order to maintain the revolution and facilitate the new Government’s work. We reject this logic because maintaining the revolution and protecting democracy and its institutions cannot run contrary to workers’ demands and can only become a reality when workers and other poorer parts of the population attain a better standard of living and the guarantee of a dignified life, since these workers represent the revolution and are its best guardians.

Original Arabic: Mr MAJDALANI (Minister of Labour, Palestine)

Allow me to express to you my great pleasure in participating in the deliberations of this Conference, an important forum for the formulation and adoption of employment policies based on the principles of social peace in our modern world. I would like to convey to you the greetings of the President Mr Mahmoud Abbas, and the greetings of the Prime Minister, Dr Salam Fayyad. On behalf of my country, and also on behalf of the delegation of Palestine, I would like to congratulate the President and the Officers on their election to lead this Conference.

We reviewed with great interest the Report of the mission submitted by the Director-General, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. We highly appreciate the valuable work which has gone into the preparation of this Report. In this context, we would like to thank the ILO for the objectivity and professionalism which characterizes this Report, as it has demonstrated in recent years

significant progress and development in the work undertaken by the mission. We have also witnessed an increase in the activities of the Organization in supporting the people and workers of Palestine. We hope that this interest and support will continue so that Palestine remains on the priority list of the ILO as a strategic partner of the Palestinian Ministry of Labour, especially during such difficult conditions which our country is still experiencing, because of continued occupation of our land, and impasses in the peace process. We hope that this collaboration will continue so as to ensure that this Report continues to be balanced with the foundations and orientations on which the idea for its preparation and annual publication was initially based.

In view of the events currently under way in our modern world, including comprehensive and deep political and societal developments, social peace is a serious goal sought by most societies which aspire to progress and welfare, as a guarantee of the means for a decent life for all peoples. Perhaps our Palestinian people, who are still suffering under one of the last occupations in the world, is a people which seeks to attain that goal more than any other people, especially on account of its own suffering. However, I would like to underline that our country, Palestine, is still lacking one of the conditions which is a prerequisite to the success of comprehensive and lasting development: liberation and political independence.

As you are well aware, the leaders of the Palestinian people would like to reiterate their commitment to the alternative of a balanced peace based on UN resolutions. They continue to work in all seriousness as a positive partner in the peace process in order to realize constructive coexistence, put an end to violence, and safeguard regional and international interests of all parties without exception.

In light of the above, and in view of the overall Israeli practices of occupation, reflected in the ensuing siege, assassination and destruction, the national Palestinian economy in general, and the labour market in particular, are still suffering from a suffocating crisis which impedes the realization of any true development of any kind. Thus, according to the latest labour force statistics, in the first quarter of 2012, unemployment is still high in the Palestinian territories, reaching 22 per cent (i.e. 261,000 persons) of the total labour force. This percentage rises to 27.4 per cent (about 315,000 persons) when using the wider definition. In other words, one out of four persons in the labour force is without a job. Unemployment is concentrated among young persons, as the rate rises to 41.2 per cent in the 20–24 age group, with 34.7 per cent among men and 61 per cent among women. It is to be highlighted that women's participation in the labour force is still very low at only 17.3 per cent.

The Palestinian economy is still fragile and preventing the Palestinian National Authority from achieving more progress in development. It is therefore vital that the Palestinian labour force continues working in Israel, while waiting for the Palestinian economy to attain a level of development enabling it to create job opportunities commensurate with the increase in the volume of the labour force.

The Palestinian National Authority, despite its limited resources, and the increased burdens it has to bear, has endeavoured to promote social peace by reducing the gap between rich and poor; create job opportunities for unemployed workers; provide an

environment suitable for investment; promote labour inspection and occupational safety and health and labour relations; and interact with local and international civil society institutions. The Ministry of Labour also focuses on reaping the profits of its work in the social and economic fields, by disseminating a culture of social dialogue, and widening its coverage in society through the following: the adoption of a bill on the Social and Economic Council; the adoption of the minimum wage; following up on the adoption of a bill on the National Agency for Employment; and following up on the promulgation of a Presidential decree on the regulation of cooperatives. Furthermore, the Committee on Workers' Policies was restructured, as its mandate ended. It includes a new work programme, in addition to the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection which was set up with ILO financial support.

We appeal to you all: governments, peoples, institutions and organizations, to stand by our people, and support us in our just and legitimate struggle to end Israeli occupation of the Arab and Palestinian territories, and to enable us to set up an independent, sovereign State, on its national soil, with Al-Quds as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions so as to ensure peace and stability in the region.

Mr STAN (*Worker, Romania*)

On behalf of the Workers' delegation from Romania, please allow me to congratulate the President on his election to chair this very important session of the International Labour Conference.

The central theme of the Conference regarding employment policy is extremely important in this difficult period of prolonged economic crisis, recession, when we are witnessing an unprecedented increase of unemployment throughout the world.

In this context, I would like, on behalf of the Workers' delegation from Romania, to draw your attention to some issues that we are facing within the field of employment and job creation with respect to the Decent Work Agenda promoted by the ILO with such steadfastness.

Unfortunately, in the past four years, the Romanian Government has completely ignored the importance of these major fields – especially that of the social dimension of the labour relations – by implementing unpopular measures, such as wage cuts, massive lay-offs in the public sector, tax increases and a freeze on pensions, accompanied by cuts in public social services and extreme austerity measures, singular among the EU Member States, but agreed upon with the international financial institutions.

An unprecedented disintegration of the social dialogue process has added to the problem of the extremely harsh measures already implemented, and translated into a unilateral change of the social legislation with a total disregard for the ILO's views expressed in its Technical Memorandum of December 2010, which recommended the Romanian Government to respect the ILO's provisions.

Without consideration for these opinions, without consultations with the social partners, without democratic debate within the Romanian Parliament on these changes in the social legislation, and taking into account only the interests and opinions of the international financial institutions and multinational companies, the Labour Code was drastically

amended. A new Social Dialogue Code, which is completely non-functional, was introduced, which did away with the National Collective Agreement and the Branch-level Collective Agreement.

Under the Social Dialogue Code, the activity of the Economic and Social Council was practically blocked, tripartite social dialogue at all levels – local or institutional – were almost entirely abolished and bipartite dialogue was seriously hampered by the introduction of representativeness criteria that are hard to meet, especially for the employers' organizations.

Despite the fact that, last year, Romania was on the list of special cases discussed by the Committee on the Application of Standards for violating the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No 98), and despite the fact that the conclusions drawn up by the Committee were extremely clear, the Romanian Government ignored all these developments and continued its policy of marginalization and defamation of the social partners – and of the trade union representatives in particular.

In this very complex social, economic and political context, in April 2012, the former Government lost the support of the Parliament majority and was replaced by a social and liberal Government, which we hope will be able to accomplish what it has promised: the renegotiation of social legislation; the reinforcement of social dialogue; the revalorization of the social partners; and, most importantly, the creation of jobs that are able to respond to the concept of decent work and present a real and viable solution for our country so that it might emerge from the crisis – jobs that will alleviate the extremely high unemployment rate and, generally, reinforce the concept of the social state.

In these efforts made by the social partners – and this time, hopefully, endorsed by the Government – we are hoping for sustained support and professional assistance from the ILO, in order to bring social legislation once again into line with ILO standards, with a view to creating labour relations based on equality, respect and responsibility.

Original Portuguese: Mr MOTTA (Worker, Brazil)

We would like to congratulate the authorities, governments, leaders, employers and workers of member States and greet Director-General Juan Somavia, who, through his great efforts, has made it possible for us to convene this important Conference.

We also welcome the recently elected Director-General-elect, Mr Guy Ryder, and congratulate him. Of course, we are delighted to be here at this forum, where social justice always comes first.

The question is: at what point does the future happen? A minute ago is already the past. The construction of a world with decent work is a task that began in the past, exists in the present, and will give results in the future.

Brazil has made effective commitments to the promotion of decent work since 2003. The discussion on this subject has spread throughout Brazil.

The ILO has recognized the pioneering role of Brazil, noting that perhaps in no other country in the world has there been such an extensive process of social dialogue on the subject of employment and decent work.

The Brazilian Decent Work Agenda has three priorities:

Firstly, the creation of more and better jobs with equality of opportunity and of treatment.

Secondly, the eradication of forced labour and child labour and, in particular, the worst forms of child labour.

Thirdly, the strengthening of tripartism and social dialogue.

Brazil's experience of applying decent work and its relationship with human development indices is positive although much progress remains to be made.

In addition to the increase in employment, there has been significant creation of formal jobs; a reduction in gender and race inequalities, although they remain high; income recovery; an increase in social security coverage; an increase in trade union membership; a sharp drop in child labour; and efforts to eliminate forced labour.

Brazil was the first to launch a subnational initiative to build a decent work agenda. The State of Bahia was the first to produce a state-level agenda, followed by Mato Grosso and other states. In the State of São Paulo, a launch conference was held in November 2011 to improve the effectiveness of drafting, executing and supervising a state-level employment and decent work agenda as a means of reinforcing national policies.

Brazil is a continental and diverse country, and accordingly, the design of state-level agendas has made decent work a prerequisite for overcoming poverty and social inequalities.

We would like to emphasize one very important achievement in Brazil with regard to a future with decent work: unity among trade unions. Joint action has mobilized the trade union movement in working class struggles. Joint proposals have been made on issues relating to the world of work, thereby advancing Brazil's human development: a reduction in hours of work, an increase in the minimum wage, and the possible prohibition of outsourcing and of consequent job insecurity. These and other proposals are on the agenda of the working class for a national project to enhance the status of labour.

There are four main aspects of the agenda of the Brazilian working class.

The first aspect is principles and rights: equality of opportunity and treatment for young people, women and black people, collective bargaining, occupational safety and health, and the minimum wage.

The second is social protection: prevention and eradication of child labour, prevention and eradication of forced labour and human trafficking, informality, migration for work, social security, health, insurance and welfare.

Thirdly, labour and employment: macroeconomic credit and investment policies to create more and better jobs, inclusion of vulnerable persons, a public employment system, vocational training and funding, micro- and small enterprises, entrepreneurship, public microcredit policies, cooperatives, enterprises in the solidarity economy, rural labour and family agriculture, sustainable enterprises, green jobs and sustainable territorial development.

Fourthly and lastly, the strengthening of the tripartite and social dialogue actors as an instrument of governance and democracy.

The major challenge facing the working class in Brazil in the second decade of the twenty-first century is to vehemently oppose job insecurity in all its forms by promoting direct labour and employment

relations with the Government and employers. We believe that this is the future with decent work.

Original Russian: Ms SHCHOTKINA (Government, Belarus)

First of all I would like to pass on wishes for every success to the International Labour Conference from the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr Lukashenko.

In recent years, the International Labour Organization has encountered serious challenges.

Under the circumstances of an economic and financial crisis, the Organization has stepped up activities in promoting the concept of decent work for all.

The ILO has acted as an authoritative international body representing the interests of workers all over the world. It has been able to highlight the issues of employment and social protection in the international economic agenda.

The modern trends in national economic recovery have been marked by instability and, to a certain extent, by unpredictability.

In this connection, we are concerned about the International Labour Organization's data on the growth of unemployment and the increasing trend of underemployment.

Increasing income inequality and the inadequate growth of wages for the majority of workers invariably lead to an overall reduction in demand and disrupt the current balance.

International financial institutions warn about diminishing basic global macroeconomic indicators.

For several million people all over the world, the next phase of the economic crisis will mean job losses and, consequently, reduced income and living standards.

In this connection, we share the opinion expressed by the Director-General, Mr Somavia, that job creation must be the main priority in a State's economic policies.

In Belarus, the implementation of state policy concerning employment is carried out on an annual basis by means of the State Employment Promotion Programme. This programme ensures consistency in the measures adopted to deal with employment, their complexity and their linkage with modern priorities of State economic policy. We pay particular attention to employment among young people and women and enhancing skills, taking the requirements of the national economy into account.

At the present time, the situation in the country's labour market is still stable, and the registered unemployment rate among the economically active population is not high, at 0.7 per cent, but the number of vacancies announced by employers is more than 50 times the number of unemployed.

At the same time, the Government is addressing the issue of creating jobs with high wages, social guarantees and good working conditions.

We are focusing on increasing prosperity primarily by increasing wages.

To that end, in recent years we have conducted significant reviews of the approaches to wage regulation. Organizations of the formal economy have the right to set up wage systems independently. At the same time we are providing for an increase in wages for public sector workers.

We are promoting the principle of applying benefits packages in enterprises.

We are also providing for effective social protection.

One of the most important challenges is ensuring a stable pension system and supporting a guaranteed decent level of pensions for our citizens.

We are improving legislation and the practice of social assistance and social services to meet today's needs.

The measures which the Government has undertaken for developing the social and labour sphere are being carried out in close cooperation with trade unions and employers' associations on the basis of the principles of social partnership and tripartism.

The ILO has considerable potential to consolidate efforts being made by States around the world to implement the concept of decent work.

This potential is based on the ILO member States' universal recognition of the main targets and goals of the Organization, the willingness to promote and implement them, the profound knowledge and experience of ILO officials, and the great preserve of the ILO, the principle of tripartite representation.

I would like to say in conclusion that the Republic of Belarus fully supports the fundamental principles and tasks of the International Labour Organization and that we are ready to help actively to promote them.

Ms THAPPER (Worker, Sweden)

I am speaking on behalf of my organization, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, and also that of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees.

First of all, we want to express our deep appreciation for the work of the Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, over more than 13 years. Of the many things that can be mentioned, allow me to mention just two, the Decent Work Agenda and the Global Jobs Pact, both fundamental in putting the ILO on the global map as a key actor.

Many workers in the world are paying a high price as a result of the economic and financial crisis since 2008. Unemployment figures are rising, especially among young people. The crisis is linked to low trust and confidence. The austerity measures are often linked to attacks on workers' rights and restrictions to the functioning of trade unions. This is not the way to restore trust. We are convinced that it will instead lead to clashes and unrest, which is very negative at a time when all forces are needed to create new jobs, decent jobs, and sustainable jobs. We need to invest in education and training; we need to invest in infrastructure; and we need to lift real wages to restore demand in the economy. Workers and the unemployed cannot starve themselves out of the crisis – that is a dead end.

In my country, Sweden, the unemployment rate is nearly 8 per cent and a lot higher among young people. In addition to these figures, we hear suggestions from employers and also from some right-wing politicians to reduce salaries for young people, thus reducing them to second-class citizens. This is an inhumane policy. It will not solve the unemployment crisis and it is not acceptable for us in the trade unions.

My organization, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, just held our Congress ten days ago and, on the question of Palestine, the Congress decided to continue our support for Palestinian workers. We demand an end to the Israeli occupation and we want to see a two-state solution with a free, democratic Palestine with full workers' rights.

Auspicious greetings to the respectable Chairperson of the Conference, delegates and representatives. It is well known that our country, Myanmar, is at a transitional stage and started taking its first steps after the general election in October 2011.

In the past, we did not have rights to form any labour organizations regarding Myanmar workers' affairs. However, after the State Government enacted the Labour Organizations Law in October 2011 and Rules and Regulations of the Labour Organization in February 2012, no one can deny that today we have rights to form labour organizations, to thrive and to do activities.

Even I, having been selected as representative of the labour organizations in accordance with the laws, now have the right to give a message today at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. Therefore, according to the situation now in Myanmar we, all workers, have accepted the fact that the rights regarding the forming of labour organizations is not controversial at all. From now on, we will watch if the Labour Organization Law is in conformity – and to what extent – with particular situations for rights to form labour organizations, and compare it with international norms to see if it fits, and to what extent it fits exactly.

Sadly, before I came to the Conference and while I have been here, there have been some strikes at some privately owned factories in my country. Compared to the whole country, yes, we do not deny that the workers who are on strike are a minority. However, they are reflecting the real lives of the grass-roots workers. This view exists deeply in our hearts. The strikes are related to the basic salary issue and it is a guarantee for the life of a worker.

On the other hand, as our country is poor, most people are facing problems every day regarding food, clothing, and living expenses. We see the “basic salary issue” as a problem that needs tripartite negotiation and coordination with the Government, employers and employees. The problem also relates to the economic development in the country. Although we are satisfied to some extent with the way in which the Government is handling this issue, we should acknowledge that it needs to find better ways than these.

There is one issue I would like to include in my message and it is about child labour. Because this relates to the future of our country, we Workers should give special consideration to the issue. Because of poverty in Myanmar, there are parents who themselves have to rely on the wages of their minor children to a certain extent. Therefore, to work out the child labour problem is a huge responsibility for our country. With full understanding and consideration, I would like to say that issues such as basic pay, unemployment and child labour are all hardships that underdeveloped and developing countries encounter. Our country needs to be developed. This is the time we need help regarding technology and knowledge from the international community.

In the past, because of the unstable political situation, economic sanctions were imposed on Myanmar. We understand and believe that sanctions have an impact on the political situation to some extent. On the other hand, in the globalized world, we have experienced how sanctions have really affected the economy of our country. It is questionable that the issues I have presented – unemployment, low basic

pay and child labour – are directly related to the sanctions or not. Now with the acceleration of the progress made in the political sector, some countries who posed sanctions on Myanmar are speculating about lifting them. To those countries, I would earnestly like to tell and request you that in my country, there are a lot of unemployed who are aimless, there are a lot of young people and children who are at liquor shops, tea shops and on the streets, children who are not able to attend schools, and workers who are suffering from low basic pay. I would like to conclude my message by telling you that they are hoping and waiting for help from you.

(Mr Sukazri takes the floor.)

Original Arabic: Mr EL SHARKAWI (Worker, Egypt)

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to convey the greetings of Egyptian workers and to congratulate the President on his election. We would also like to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the ILO Director-General and we wish him every success in his role. We hope that under this leadership the ILO will see the advancement of the cause of workers throughout the world, and in particular in the countries of the Arab Spring, where workers hope to achieve their goal of “bread, freedom and social justice”.

We would also like to thank Mr Juan Somavia for his efforts to meet the objectives of our Organization, and for the Report of the Director-General, which reflects the aspirations of workers and humankind in general.

Egypt surprised the world with a revolution which began on 25 January 2011, and put an end to a dictatorial regime. The Egyptian people set out to realize their hopes and aspirations, having been deprived of these for decades. Trade unions organized strikes, demonstrations and acts of solidarity to support workers in achieving their rights and liberties. Workers' movements united behind trade unions to put forward a new bill on freedom of association enshrining international labour standards and putting an end to state interference in trade unions, in view of establishing justice and prosperity in Egypt. Political instability, however, has prevented this bill from being promulgated.

We therefore urge the ILO to provide technical and legal assistance to Egyptian trade unions to enable the promulgation of this law, in line with fundamental labour standards and granting workers the freedom to choose and of association, to pave the way for decent working conditions. This law will also help create new job opportunities for men and women and strengthen the status of women in society and within trade unions.

It is also essential to focus on youth employment, to guarantee the present and future of our nation. Social protection for workers must be promoted and health and safety conditions at work improved. We must put an end to child labour and offer social protection to migrant workers. We need to bolster fundamental principles and rights at work and strengthen trade union and collective bargaining rights. We must also fight forced labour and define the principles of social dialogue.

On behalf of my country's workers, I would like to call upon governments, employers and workers throughout the world to support the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation, which has taken a dangerous and deadly stance towards this

suffering population. We call on you all to support the Palestinian people and refuse the Israeli occupation.

In conclusion, our country is currently undergoing a difficult period, wrought with political, social and economic changes. Our trade union movement hopes that in the near future Egypt will achieve social prosperity and stability and that trade unions will work together to improve and increase production. Egypt and its trade unions have set their course and there is no going back.

I would also like to remind you of the founding principle of our Organization stating that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.

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

I must begin my address by congratulating the President and the other Officers for having been elected to preside over this session of the International Labour Conference. I am confident that your esteemed wisdom will help in ushering in a brighter future for the Organization.

The world is going through exceedingly trying times. While these times present immense opportunities, they also pose significant challenges which, if not tackled head-on, could make our Organization lose relevance.

The world economy has been severely tested in the last few years, with the greatest effects being felt within our labour markets. Recent events have indeed brought into question the prudence and the efficacy of narrow economic management tools that ignore labour market dimensions and implications.

We have, for a very long time, been told that jobs are a residue of the macroeconomics of inflation, interest rates and so forth. In fact we have been told that one of the obstacles to growth is that of over-regulated labour markets. Over the years we have also witnessed a determined undermining of the principles underpinning social justice, such as those of equity, rights-based development and of course, employment-centred growth.

At the turn of the millennium the ILO had already come up with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, clearly calling attention to the need to have growth that is supported by humane societal and working conditions. A decade later we once again called the world's attention to contemporary challenges through the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

Yet the rest of the world was caught up in a frenzy of unrestrained financial liberalism and fiscal imprudence, which led us into the current global crisis in which millions have lost their jobs and livelihoods, inevitably leading to protracted social and political tensions. As a consequence of these upheavals, thousands have needlessly lost their lives in many parts of the world. Although the world still prefers to talk about a global economic crisis, it is clear that the global crisis has since transcended the economic domain.

In spite of these realities, I salute the role that the Organization has increasingly played during the crisis in fostering partnerships with key international players. I must also thank the outgoing Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for his commendable work in this regard.

Indeed, there cannot be sustainable recovery from the crisis without the social justice that our Organi-

zation can help deliver to the helpless men and women around the world. We must continue to stand on this cherished competence of ours and play our part in directing global focus to the need for labour and employment stability as a precondition of sustainable development.

Thus, the Government of Zimbabwe believes that it is imperative for the Organization to seize the opportunity presented by the crisis, to claim centre stage in the effort to reorient the failed approaches to economic management, which have been chiefly propagated by the Bretton Woods Institutions as conditionalities for engagement with developing countries.

Development is needed, but not for its sake or for fallacious trends and statistics. It is needed to serve humanity, and the bedrock of that is social justice.

It is the expectation of the Government of Zimbabwe that our Organization can deepen its future influence within the multilateral system based on these values. We also look forward to the development of a policy and programming that will be specifically focused on the needs of the most vulnerable economies, especially those in Africa and the rest of the developing world.

Finally, may I now take the opportunity to congratulate the Director-General-elect, Mr Guy Ryder. Mr Ryder is no stranger to us and to issues in the world of work. My Government thus trusts that he will successfully steer the work of the Office, balancing the interests of the three constituencies, despite the difficult circumstances facing our Organization and the world at large.

Mr KALI (*Government, Papua New Guinea*)

I rise on behalf of the people of Papua New Guinea and the Government to present my country's response on the ILO agenda and, in particular, on the Director-General's Reports.

Our Government echoes its support for the ILO through the Director-General and the members of the ILO Governing Body, who presented inspirational reports for our review and consideration. The reports raised important issues and concerns and challenge us to seriously improve our actions to achieve positive outcomes.

Our Government has taken note of the Director-General's Report on youth unemployment issues and the recovery efforts related to the global jobs crisis, the strategic objectives of the fundamental principles and rights at work, and the social protection floor, which are also addressed under the Decent Work Country Programme.

Our own national Decent Work Country Programme emphasizes the importance of a correlated and effective legislative framework that guarantees protective options to be exercised by all parties and flourish through decent employment and job growth.

That is why we indicated to the ILO our commitment to review and improve our labour laws; to give prominence to employment, skills and competency training and human resource development; and to build and strengthen the capacity of our social partners as the way forward in addressing the provision of decent work at all levels in our society.

We require all multinational operators engaged in the country's economic development processes, specifically in the infrastructure, exploration, manufacture and exportation of natural commodities, to

improve upon and to increase the employment of Papua New Guineans.

We are enjoying unprecedented economic growth thanks to the explosion in global commodity prices and we have translated these into improvements in social welfare and job growth in all sectors. As a result of the robust economy, Papua New Guinea is experiencing a vast increase in foreign investment in all economic sectors, which will double GDP over the next five years. Our biggest challenge is therefore to ensure that the fruits of this economic development increase our prosperity through health care, improved education, and a better standard of living.

We are obliged to ensure that the fundamental principles enshrined in our national Constitution for integral human development for all, and a fairer distribution of wealth, are not lost sight of. It is our pledge that human dignity in the workplace, and the promotion of the right to work, will be observed as our economy grows.

We pledge our support for the outcomes and recommendations emphasized by the Director-General's Report in their entirety.

We are rapidly addressing the employment and welfare issues raised in the Reports in conjunction with the support of the ILO regional office.

The recently enacted Lukautim Pikinini Act (2010) prescribing care for children and the ongoing review of major labour laws, indicates our level of commitment to protect the basic and fundamental rights of our workers and our children.

Our country has ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and will see their practical incorporation into our labour and social legislation.

We also continue in our efforts to incorporate, in a meaningful way, the spirit of the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up as well as the 2008 Declaration.

Our country has adopted a long-term "Vision 2050" strategy constructed around directive goals and principles of our national Constitution to guide our national development plans. It also gives prominence to the concept of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which we believe will propel us to make Papua New Guinea a happy, healthy, wealthy and wise society. I must applaud the ILO for this visionary contribution which is influencing our national destiny.

With the technical support of the ILO, our Decent Work Country Programme will be reviewed this year.

Our Government fully supports the adoption of the ILO HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200), the formulation of an international labour standard on domestic workers and the formulation of effective employment practices that will best serve our nation's interests.

I wish you well in your deliberations and the decisions we collectively make for the benefit of humanity the world over.

Mr DUMITRIU (*Representative, Council of Europe*)

The European Social Charter, adopted by the Council of Europe in 1961, draws from the letter and spirit of ILO standards. It is a broad instrument which guarantees rights to housing, health, education, work and social protection. It provides positive obligations to secure just working conditions and

fair remuneration, social and medical assistance, and eradication of discrimination at the workplace.

The European Social Charter is the twin pillar to the European Convention on Human Rights. In many ways, they represent together the best of the European democratic and social model.

The validity and vitality of this model are once again tested by the multiform economic and financial crisis. The current crisis has severe consequences; austerity makes the implementation of social rights even more difficult. Social discontent reveals the growing importance of respecting social rights. The rise in unemployment aggravates all those consequences.

The Social Charter does not impose a single European social model. It invites States to find their own solutions, on one condition: that the human dignity of individuals is respected in every circumstance.

The European Committee of Social Rights, the body entrusted with monitoring tasks, under the reporting and the collective complaints systems, is called to deliver interpretations that contribute to a proper implementation of the Charter. Not surprisingly, the number of registered complaints has increased recently.

At a time of economic uncertainty, it is vital for the European social dimension to remain a credible guarantor of social democracy.

In the context of the 50th anniversary of the European Social Charter, all institutions of the Council of Europe revalidated its significance.

The Committee of Ministers underlined the particular relevance of social rights in times of economic difficulties, in particular for vulnerable groups. It reiterated its determination to keep building cohesive societies by ensuring fair access to social rights.

The Secretary-General, Thorbjørn Jagland, recalled that economic crisis and poverty create conditions which can foster extremism and violence. Indeed, this was one of the lessons learned at the end of the First World War, which led to the creation of the ILO. This was also the underlying principle of the creation of the Council of Europe after the Second World War.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has repeatedly expressed its support for a collective complaints procedure. Collective action brings the values of democracy into the daily functioning of state structures.

The European Court of Human Rights contributes by its jurisprudence to the expansion of its protection to economic and social rights, in particular in the area of rights at the workplace and rights of workers' representatives.

The Commissioner for Human Rights warned that fiscal austerity measures may have disproportionately affected the human rights of the most vulnerable social groups and called for conscientious effort by European governments to alleviate the harsh impact of the financial crisis.

The Council of Europe acknowledges that social partners are essential in ensuring the effectiveness of the rights enshrined in the European Social Charter. We echo the position of the European Trade Union Confederation, which emphasized that, in times of crisis, when the social *acquis* is challenged, standards should safeguard at least a minimum of protection.

This crisis is a real endurance test for the social rights protected by the Council of Europe and by the labour standards of the ILO. These are human rights which must be guaranteed independently of whether budgets are austere or not. Social rights and fundamental principles and rights at work are not only crucial to the dignity of individuals; they are part and parcel of what democracy is about.

Allowing setbacks and reversibility of these rights and principles would be unforgivable in the eyes of history. Protecting them is not a policy choice, but a moral obligation.

Ms MAKANGALA (*Minister of Labour, Malawi*)

I should like to congratulate the President and the Officers of the Conference on their election to steer the deliberations of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. So far, you have steered our Conference very well and we look forward to the successful conclusion of our work. Let me also congratulate the Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia for his well-written reports, which clearly show the performance of the Office in achieving the stated goals of our Organization and clearly identify actions and ways to further improve performance. Furthermore, let me congratulate the Director-General-elect, Mr Guy Ryder, on his election. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Malawi, I wish you all the best as you embark on steering the International Labour Organization.

My delegation noted with interest the position taken by the ILO on ensuring that all citizens in our various countries enjoy social security benefits. The Recommendation on the social protection floor for fair and inclusive globalization is a welcome, bold step that will assist member States in ensuring that social protection floors are put in place as a fundamental element of their national social security systems. Allow me to highlight just a few achievements that Malawi has registered in recent years regarding social protection for its citizens.

First, we launched our Decent Work Country Programme, which was developed through extensive consultations, including tripartite-plus forums. Three priority areas were identified: employment creation and combating child labour; enhancing and extending social protection; and the capacity building of labour administration and social partners. I am pleased to inform this august House that we have already started implementing some of the key activities of the Programme. In particular, we have developed the National Employment and Labour Policy and a national profile on Occupational Safety and Health, reformed our labour laws and improved our labour market information system with the introduction of the Labour Force Survey and the Child Labour Survey. On 1 July, 2011, Malawi introduced its first mandatory pension law, which makes it mandatory for every employer to ensure that all their employees contribute to a pension fund.

Second, the development of the National Labour and Employment Policy in Malawi will ensure that vulnerable groups, including young people, women and people with disabilities participate actively in all aspects of employment. It will mainstream their employment interests in policies, laws and programmes relating to business and employment. Skills development and diversification is one area that requires adequate support from the ILO to assist member States like Malawi to provide the skills

required by industry so as to reduce the current skills gap and ensure that the problem of youth unemployment is addressed effectively.

As part of its social protection programme, the Government has also continued implementing its unconditional social cash transfer programme, which has been rolled out from the original two districts to nine districts. An initial assessment of the programme has indicated an increase in household assets, a reduction in the use of child labour, and a tremendous improvement in nutrition, to mention just a few of its achievements.

At the macroeconomic level, Malawi has continued to implement with considerable success its national development policy of transforming the country from a predominantly importing and consuming nation to a net exporter, as articulated in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy – Phase Two. The results are visible; the country has registered high economic growth of around 6 per cent per annum over the last five years, including during the economic crisis period. Poverty was reduced from 52 per cent in 2005 to 40 per cent in 2008. The growth in the economy is mainly attributed to the performance of the agriculture sector. Malawi has demonstrated to the world with considerable success that, contrary to conventional wisdom, home-grown policies using local capabilities can ignite high growth. In this regard, I refer to the Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme, introduced in 2004, which has contributed to changing the country from a food deficit to a food surplus economy. There is no doubt that the growth in agricultural production has increased rural employment and earnings and is likely to have multiplier effects in other sectors.

What the country needs now is to find ways of sustaining agricultural growth and productivity as well as improving the employment impact of the strategy, both in terms of quantity and quality of employment. We would like to invite the ILO, in its role of capacity building, to help with the assessment of the employment impact of our agricultural strategy.

My delegation is happy to note that the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) is fully aligned with Decent Work Country Programmes. I therefore appeal to the ILO to continue mobilizing resources and funding Decent Work Country Programmes, and to consider including projects for Malawi to enable us to implement our Decent Work Country Programme.

Let me conclude my statement by paying tribute to the Governing Body of the ILO for placing critical technical topics on the agenda of the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. We look forward to a successful conclusion on all the topics.

Mr MOHAMED (*Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, Mauritius*)

Let me begin by congratulating Mr Guy Ryder on his election as the new Director-General of the ILO. I would like to take this opportunity to assure him of my personal support, as well as that of the Government of Mauritius, in the discharge of his responsibilities as Director-General.

I consider that putting the youth employment crisis on the agenda of the Conference is very opportune. When we think about the high figures of youth unemployment worldwide, it is indeed a challenge that all countries in the world have to face. We,

Mauritius, have decided to face that challenge head on.

In our recent Government programme for 2012–15, we have decided to address the issue of youth unemployment by coming up with a three-year national youth employment programme. It will be a programme to address unemployment among young people aged between 16 and 25 and to provide them with apprenticeships, training and placements. In so doing, we are also trying to ensure that we can place young people in employment after apprenticeships or training, in various sectors of our economy.

The Government of Mauritius has also embarked on the implementation of circular migration projects. We have signed bilateral agreements with many friendly countries, such as Canada, France and Italy, and we are soon to sign new agreements with friendly countries like the United Arab Emirates.

I would also like to underline here that, for any small island State, like Mauritius, any policy in matters of employment should be sustainable, not only economically, but socially and ecologically. I seize this opportunity to thank the ILO for supporting Mauritius in its endeavour to become a sustainable island through the promotion of green jobs, which will allow for the generation of alternative employment with reduced environmental impact. This was the vision of our Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, in the “Maurice Ile Durable” project. Not only is this a vision; it is now being implemented with the help of the ILO.

I would also like to underline here that, in spite of the difficult economic situation worldwide, Mauritius has not only been able to maintain the welfare State, with free public health, free education, free transport for students and the elderly, and social security, but is also going further by consolidating social protection, particularly for those most vulnerable.

(The speaker continues in French.)

Allow me to make use of this opportunity which has been given to me to recall before the Conference that we have completed all of the necessary procedures in Mauritius to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which was adopted last year.

(The speaker continues in English.)

Very soon we will be amongst the first countries to have completely ratified this particular Convention.

Last, but not least, let me express my sincere appreciation to the outgoing Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, a man of vision, a man who has opened up a new era while at the helm of the ILO. He has undoubtedly left an indelible imprint on his time as Director-General. He has left his imprint on this époque, this era, and it will be very difficult for us to forget what he has done while he has been at the helm of the ILO. Therefore, I take this opportunity in my own name, and in the name of the Government of Mauritius, to wish him well and to say to him that he will be sorely missed.

Original Spanish: Ms MUÑOZ (Employer, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

We are delighted to have a President from Latin America again at this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. We wish every success

to the recently elected Director-General-elect, Mr Guy Ryder, and congratulate Mr Juan Somavia on his 13 years as Director-General.

This is the only tripartite international Organization, and its great achievement has been the fight to implement social dialogue as the best means of achieving progress in labour relations and national development. What has happened this year within the Committee on the Application of Standards should be deemed an example of social dialogue and democracy. Social partners, constituents of this Organization, may have differing views and, in fact, this often happens. It is via social dialogue that we find ways to resolve and agree on our positions.

This should not be taken as any offence to the distinguished members of the Committee of Experts or as a disparaging remark towards Office officials, let alone as aggressive behaviour by the Employers towards the Workers. I would insist that it has been a good example of tripartite social dialogue and democracy. It is very important to be able to freely discuss the issues on which we disagree and to discuss them in an environment of dignity and respect.

But not all member countries of the ILO follow its teachings.

In Venezuela over the last decade, many restrictions have been imposed on private activities, many of which have led to complaints to the ILO by FEDECAMARAS, which is the most representative employers' organization in the country.

Restrictions on the exercise of freedom of association have led, according to official figures, to the closing down of 170,000 companies in the country over the last decade, companies which might today be providing work to some 800,000 people.

In this context, the Venezuelan Government, in breach of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, issued on 30 April 2012, a Presidential Decree with the rank of an Organic Act based on enabling legislation of 2010 from the National Assembly in response to catastrophic rainfall in the country.

The Organic Labour Act is the most important social contract for us after our Constitution, but the social partners have been excluded from the discussion, in violation of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). The proposal only came to light when this law was published in the *Official Gazette*.

Furthermore, this new law introduces burdens and additional responsibilities on employers, and restrictions on the workings of businesses, which do not help with achieving the presumed aim, that is, productive employment and decent work through sustainable enterprise.

The lack of consultation is not just in breach of ILO Convention No. 144, but it has also meant that this new law ignores the realities of the country with regard to unemployment, inflation and informality. A major opportunity to reach an agreement on a law which would have created jobs and provided investment openings in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been lost. Work has become a privilege rather than a right.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are those which will be hardest hit, and it will be difficult to establish enterprises. This will restrict the creation of new businesses and jobs because they will be unable to bear the costs involved in this new law.

We are grateful to the ILO for any efforts to check the massive failure on the part of Venezuela to

comply with international standards, and we emphasize again the need for the ILO to send a high-level mission to our country in October this year.

Ms ALEXANDER (*Minister for Labour and Human Resource Development, Seychelles*)

It is of significant importance that the member States of the International Labour Organization meet once again for the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference to deliberate pertinent issues relating to employment and decent work. I am honoured and privileged, as a new Minister for Labour, to form part of this noble cause.

I would like at the outset to express my gratitude, and that of the President and the people of the Republic of Seychelles, to Mr Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the ILO. During his term of office, Mr Somavia has made positive contributions to the Seychelles and the global world community through his vision of decent work for all.

I would also like to convey my warm congratulations to Mr Guy Ryder on his appointment as the new Director-General of the ILO. I look forward to working together in the near future.

I am pleased to note that, as described in the Report of the Director-General, *ILO programme implementation 2010–11*, the ILO has achieved results in working towards all the strategic objectives of decent work. I firmly believe that looking back on the ILO's performance and member States' cooperation activities is a good way for us to build on our achievements and work on the challenges ahead in the present biennium and beyond. The Report thus encourages a moment of reflection on our policies and actions.

It is quite important to recognize that, with the ILO's support, member States, including the Seychelles, have made considerable progress in their frameworks and practices to further mainstream decent work into national objectives.

In November 2011, Seychelles signed its Decent Work Country Programme with the ILO – an historic achievement, endorsed at the highest political level, which shows the continued commitment of the Government of Seychelles to make decent work a reality for its people.

We acknowledge that we need to create conducive conditions for decent work to be realized. As mentioned in the Report, the years in review have been challenging for the world of work, but these difficult times have compelled international organizations and governments alike to respond and adopt neutral economic and social measures to protect workers and the unemployed. In noticing this trend, I wish to urge ministries of labour to be proactive and committed to the needs of workers and jobseekers, and encourage international organizations to initiate sustainable approaches that remain relevant in times of crisis.

Today, the youth employment crisis presents the rationale to develop feasibility policies and comprehensive solutions that will renew the confidence of our young people in our strategies. In the Seychelles, youth form the majority of jobseekers, as a result of the difficulty of securing decent work, strict requirements by employers and the high expectations of young people. We know that, when such expectations are not met instantly, young people become discouraged from working and tend to settle for employment opportunities that do not necessarily match their interests. As a consequence,

this creates mobility of young workers and eventually unemployment.

A young, productive workforce is important for the growth of our country. In the Seychelles, a considerable budget is allocated every year to implement skills development programmes and train unskilled and inexperienced young male and female jobseekers. Additionally, my Ministry is bridging the experience gap through close partnerships with employers to develop incentive packages to attract and recruit young jobseekers. New school-to-work strategies will also be initiated in secondary and post-secondary schools to better prepare our young people for the world of work.

It is therefore my wish for all constituents to take ownership of the youth employment crisis and for the ILO to consider new international labour standards for young people in order to further promote youth employment. Let us turn our challenges into opportunities to guarantee decent jobs for our young people.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate the ILO for its hard work and achievements in the previous biennium, and I remain confident that greater accomplishments are yet to come.

Mr JAVED (*Employer, Pakistan*)

On behalf of Pakistan, I congratulate the President on his election to preside over this important global Conference. At the same time I would like to congratulate the ILO Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, for the excellent arrangements for the International Labour Conference and for his outstanding Report.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to speak here at the International Labour Conference. Pakistan sincerely hopes and prays for success, which shall result in paving the way for improvement in the recovery and growth with decent work, finding ways and means to resolve the problems faced by the youth and in getting employment in an amicable manner. It shall also have the result of improving the situation in fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue through tripartite Recommendations and the social protection floor, as well as some other important issues being discussed in this Conference.

This year we are saying farewell to Mr Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, and to Mr Antonio Peñalosa, Secretary-General of my organization, the IOE. I would like to pay very rich tribute to Mr Somavia and Mr Peñalosa for the excellent leadership they provided to both our organizations. I also avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election to the office of Director-General of the ILO and Mr Brent Wilton on his appointment as Secretary-General of our IOE. I assure both of them that they can bank on the wholehearted support of Pakistan.

I assume that the new Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder, will further strengthen the role of the tripartite constituents in the ILO's functions, which is the need of the hour.

The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), was a major victory for domestic workers and was adopted a year ago at the last session of the Conference. Our country supported and voted for it, as the philosophy of Islam requires us, out of respect for those working with us, not only to respect them but to take care of them. This is the reason why the great Caliph Umar, upon entering Jeru-

saalem, was walking beside his camel while his personal servant was riding, as it was the servant's turn to ride and the king's turn to walk. The world leaders need to practise the golden principles of social justice and, very truly, the ILO Conventions are of tremendous help in achieving this, as these are the outcomes of the tripartite consultative process.

The issues taken for this Conference are most appropriate. Employment generation and decent employment are the areas to be focused on.

I would like to repeat, if I may, that the International Monetary Fund should make employment generation a first condition when granting loans to different countries.

We would like to congratulate the Director-General on the Report of the high-level ILO mission to the occupied Arab territories.

The efforts with respect to Myanmar are not only commendable, but are proof of the success of tripartism, the Office and the constituents' efforts, which have made history. We provide assurance of our assistance to Myanmar in industrial relations, social protection, social dialogue and skill development.

Since 2005, the Government of Pakistan has been following the Decent Work Agenda, and the employers and the workers are very important players in it. We are very conscious of the importance of the informal sector; we have five skill development councils which are providing training to our youth and also to workers.

This year, in the third week of June, we are having a special event at Rio+20, and the employers of Pakistan are hosting this event. We hope that we will be able to give a very good message from the South.

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

I congratulate the President on his election at the 2012 session of the International Labour Conference. Thank you also for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), an NGO that has long been accredited to the International Labour Conference because of its commitment to the education and advancement of women and girls.

The IFUW serves an important function in complementing the fundamental tripartism of the ILO through a strong network of national associations of educated women, whose mission is to promote equal opportunities for men and women and boys and girls, primarily through Education for the Rights of Girls and Women, our current international theme.

The theme is understood to include the themes of Education for empowerment and leadership, Education for freedom from violence, Education for financial independence, employment and entrepreneurship and Education for sustainable futures. We are therefore especially pleased to support the work of this Conference in the development of policy guidance for youth and employment and for a social protection floor, both of which have fundamental relevance to the mission and work of the IFUW through its many national affiliates.

We are also proud to announce the Conchita Poncini Jimenez Human Rights Fellowship for the advancement of women and girls. The award is named in honour of our friend Conchita. From her professional career over 30 years with the ILO to her active volunteer work as the IFUW representative to

the United Nations and the ILO for another 17 years, Conchita spent her life fighting for gender equality and women's empowerment. The fellowship will be awarded for advanced research, an internship or study related to the use of human rights instruments and agreements for the advancement of women.

We appreciate the attention that is being given at this Conference to youth employment, both at the forum that preceded the Conference and in the Committee on Youth Employment. We agree that we are dealing with a serious global youth unemployment crisis. The main concern is that this may become a structural regularity and that this will merely aggravate the existing disparities facing girls and young women if no significant policy changes are made.

The MDGs have mobilized us all to address poverty alleviation, gender equality and education, and we applaud the prospects of realizing the target for girls and women in education by 2015. However, we also recognize that we need to do more and that youth unemployment is reaching unprecedented proportions. Young people are also disproportionately represented in low-paid work. Both of these indicators are even worse for young women, who are less likely to be employed and more likely to receive a lower wage for work of equal value than their male counterparts.

Despite lower labour force participation rates, female unemployment is, in most cases, higher than that for males. Since the crisis hit, the gap in most regions in unemployment rates between men and women is even greater, and has widened.

Most young workers have to settle for low-wage jobs with a decreasing possibility of upward mobility. And this is particularly worrisome for young women because of the prevalence of occupational segregation. We encourage the Conference to prioritize renewed efforts to define how linkages between educational opportunity and skills development can prepare young men and women equally and with more equal outcomes.

In the Committee on the Social Protection Floor, we are pleased to see that the proposed text has recognized the importance of promoting gender equality. We encourage translating that into specific gender considerations, such as protection against sexual violence and the importance of including maternal and child care and nutrition in the social protection floor.

In general, governments and member States should ensure social security policies that account for the changing roles of women and men, promote gender equality and provide maternity protection and support the empowerment of women.

Finally, the IFUW has regularly raised concerns about gender bias in the ILO Constitution and the principle of gender equality in the composition of delegations to the Conference. We note that the figures for 2012 show a deterioration in the proportion of women on delegations after three years of steady improvement. We urge the ILO to review its policies to stimulate a return to improving the gender balance in the future and to pay attention to improving support of the NGOs that are working to complement the work of the tripartite organization of the ILO.

With these remarks, I thank you for this opportunity and wish you well in the remainder of the Conference.

On behalf of the Uruguayan employers' sector, we would like to send our greetings to the Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, and congratulate the Director-General-elect, Guy Ryder. On the first day of the Conference, the Director-General-elect said, "I am ... conscious of the responsibility of the Director-General of this Organization, to represent faithfully and equally the views and the interests of all of this Organization's tripartite constituency – governments, employers and workers – ... and my efforts and my capacities will be wholeheartedly dedicated to doing just that". We fully share Mr Ryder's vision and we believe that this is the way forward if we are to successfully meet the challenges the world of work poses to governments, workers and employers. The challenges are increasing on a daily basis, but they can be overcome with decent work and sustainable companies.

This year the Conference has considered a number of different issues that are closely related to labour relations in Uruguay. In the Committee on the Application of Standards, there has been discussion about the right to strike, its scope, and the ILO legislation on which it is based. The Employer sector was subject to some harsh criticism in that regard, and we need to be very specific about this: at no point did the Employers' sector question the right to strike. That right is firmly established at the highest legal level and it is enshrined in many of our countries' Constitutions. What is at stake in our discussions is its scope, given the lack of a legal instrument within the ILO framework in that regard.

There is a similar situation in Uruguay. The right to strike is a constitutional right and no employer would think of questioning it. But that same Constitution, which enshrines the right to strike, also provides that this right should be regulated by law, and no such legislation exists as yet. This regulatory lacuna has allowed serious excesses to take place in the right to strike in Uruguay, which has undermined other fundamental labour rights. During the sit-ins which have been afflicting our country, non-striking workers have been unable to work and employers have been unable to gain access to their premises. Violence sometimes ensues, and is, in any case, implicit in the very act of sitting-in.

This is one of the issues involved in the complaint which the Uruguayan employers, in conjunction with the International Organisation of Employers, presented to the ILO. The Committee on Freedom of Association has already taken a stance on that case and it was examined by the Committee on the Application of Standards in 2011. Given that the situation remains unchanged, the case is still before the ILO. We need to stress that the Uruguayan Employers' sector is not seeking preferential legislation; we simply want the guidelines that the ILO tripartite bodies have issued – which include both legislative and practical aspects – to be respected. We are asking for no more and no less than what the ILO has already proposed, and which we fully endorse. Unfortunately, our efforts to date have not borne fruit beyond the various different tripartite statements that have been made at the ILO.

Before concluding, we would like to make a brief reference to the discussions which have been held in the Committee on the Application of Standards, which have given rise to so much criticism of the Employers. We believe that the time for reflection

has come; we now have an opportunity to improve the Committee's work. At no point have we called into question the fundamental importance of the tripartite system, the ILO's supervisory mechanisms, or the existence of the right to strike. This should be clearly understood. On the contrary, we share the view expressed by the Chairperson of the Committee on the Application of Standards at the end of the discussion: maybe we are taking a step back that will surely enable us to take ten steps forward.

Mr IQBAL (Worker, Indonesia)

First of all, allow me, on behalf of all Indonesian trade union federations but especially the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Union, to congratulate the President for assuming his role of guiding the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. We would also like to congratulate our brother, Guy Ryder, who has been elected as the new Director-General of the ILO. It is our belief that the ILO will continue its work in creating a sense of justice and protecting the welfare of workers and their families around the world.

Indonesia is one of the biggest countries in the world, with a population of 237 million. Indonesia is a member of the G20, with a GDP of 7,508 trillion rupiah or US\$834 billion, and therefore it ranks 17th out of 190 countries in the world. At the same time, it is very ironic that 90 per cent of its GDP is enjoyed only by the wealthiest 10 per cent of the people. The wages of workers were ranked 68th out of 100 countries surveyed by the ILO, with the average minimum wage in Indonesia at US\$120 per month.

Indonesia, like so many developing countries, is still using low-wage policies to attract investors. We are of the view that there is a disturbing sense of justice and humanity when the developing countries with high GDP (including Indonesia) offer only the low levels of wages referred to above. The average wage is only sufficient to support workers and their families for 18 calendar days. Basic needs for the 12 remaining days can only be met by borrowing money from others.

We strongly believe that low-wage policies in developing countries create a cycle of poverty for workers. We therefore call upon the ILO to urge companies, in particular multinational corporations, to provide a decent living wage, not low wages, to workers in developing countries. Low wages offered by multinational corporations and investors can be considered as labour exploitation.

The exploitation of workers is increasingly felt in developing countries, including Indonesia, that adopt systems enforcing precarious work, or outsourcing, and lack a social protection floor. We consider precarious work to be labour without any social protection floor, health insurance, pensions or future. Precarious work serves only to exploit labourers with low wages. We are of the view that precarious workers suffer as much as people oppressed by war. We are deeply concerned that the number of precarious workers continues to increase. Moreover, the Government needs to do more to find a way to deal with this situation.

In Indonesia, we estimate that 47 per cent of work in capital-intensive industries is precarious, rising to 80 per cent in labour-intensive industries. Precarious work has led to the declining density of union membership and failure to implement social protec-

tion floors, and will directly increase the number of unemployed young workers as a result of short employment contracts.

Under the Social Security Action Committee, the trade union movement in Indonesia has contributed to reforming Indonesian social security, and the Government and Parliament have agreed on universal health insurance coverage, pensions, and so on.

Within the framework of the ILO, we encourage the Conference to continue discussing this issue as a matter of priority. We hope that, at the 102nd or 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference, this will result in agreed guidelines to address the issue of precarious work and the significance of implementing decent wages. The absence of any agreed guidelines on this matter will be detrimental to workers.

Mr KNOX-VYDMANOV (*Representative, HelpAge International*)

I speak on behalf of HelpAge International – an NGO and global network of over 90 affiliates in 60 countries – that has a vision of the world in which all older people can lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives.

We would like to express our wholehearted support for the Recommendation on the social protection floor, which we sincerely hope will be adopted by this Conference. Last week, a statement signed by over 50 NGOs, including HelpAge, was submitted to the Conference in support of the Recommendation, a demonstration that many around the world are eagerly awaiting the decision that will be made by delegates next week.

HelpAge International has been at the frontline of debates around social protection at national and international levels for over a decade, often working in close collaboration with the ILO and its constituents. We have seen a shift from social protection being seen as an unaffordable luxury for developing countries to a growing recognition that it is essential, not only for the fulfilment of the right to social security, but as a solid foundation for equitable growth. The development of this Recommendation is a timely recognition of this shift in thinking, and has the potential to be an important catalyst for accelerated extension of social protection floors across the globe.

It is also a timely reminder for those countries looking to scale back their social protection systems, not to forget the crucial role that they play in creating fair and equitable societies.

HelpAge particularly recommends that basic income security for persons in old age should be outlined as one of the four basic social security guarantees within the Recommendation.

For most of us, old age is one of the greatest vulnerabilities that we will face during our lives. However, the situation and role of older people within our societies often goes unrecognized. Public policy commonly fails to protect people against the decreased earning capacity and increased health challenges associated with old age, overlooking the fact that they can constitute major shocks to some of the poorest households. There is also limited recognition of the significant contribution people continue to make into old age, and particularly the major caring role that older people play within families, households and communities. This contribution has been most vividly exposed in countries hit hard by the HIV pandemic that has left older people, and

particularly older women, as principal carers for orphans left behind and people living with the virus. A similar trend emerges as a result of labour migration, where grandparents are taking on the caring responsibility for grandchildren when the middle generation goes in search of better work opportunities.

Yet, only a minority of older people around the world – estimated at about one in five – receive even a minimum pension. In the absence of a pension, a large proportion of older people – especially in developing countries – continue to work into old age, but in employment that is less decent and less secure than the younger generations. These issues are of increasing concern in the context of population ageing, which is already beginning to transform the demographics of many developing countries.

Nevertheless, a silver lining to this story is the example set by many countries that have taken steps to guarantee basic income security for older people. Over 100 countries across the world – many represented here – have put in place social pensions, also known as non-contributory pensions, which cover those who – through no fault of their own – are unable to save for old age. The design of these schemes varies, as does coverage, but there is no doubt that social pensions make a huge difference to the well-being, not just of older people, but of their families and communities. We are also seeing many countries move away from seeing social pensions simply as a residual safety net to their integration as a foundation and complement to the wider pension system.

The variety of countries with social pensions ranges from some of the world's richest to low and lower middle-income countries such as Bolivia, Lesotho, Nepal and Timor-Leste. These examples, once again, underline the spirit of this Recommendation, reminding us that it is rarely too early for countries to begin the process of progressively, but meaningfully, expanding social protection floors.

We once again congratulate the International Labour Organization and you, its constituents, for having placed this Recommendation on the agenda, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with you in order to make this Recommendation a reality on the ground.

Original French: Ms ZEINABOU (Representative, StreetNet International)

On behalf of StreetNet International, I would like to congratulate the President and the Officers warmly on their election.

StreetNet is an international federation of organizations of street vendors in Africa, America, Asia and Eastern Europe. The federation represents 501,178 paid-up members and its Constitution provides for at least 50 per cent participation by women in its decision-making bodies and in all its activities.

I would like to highlight the work carried out by the ILO to promote decent work policies, including for workers in the informal sector, since the adoption of the conclusions on decent work and the informal economy at the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2002.

As a result, StreetNet has participated in the work of the Committee on Migrant Workers in 2004; the Committee on the Employment Relationship in 2006; the Committee on HIV/AIDS in 2010; and now the Committee on the Social Protection Floor

in 2012. At national level, StreetNet encourages its member organizations to participate in national decent work programmes to ensure that their concerns are taken into account more fully.

StreetNet's approach is to promote a process of turning informal work into formal work, as follows: recognizing workers in the informal economy in legislation; incorporating the incomes of workers in the informal sector into official fiscal systems; extending social security to all; having statutory negotiating bodies, including at local government level, and participatory negotiations at local and national government level; creating true cooperatives controlled by workers; and transforming the informal economy into a social economy that works on solidarity.

StreetNet would like to thank the outgoing Director-General, Mr Somavia, for his prompt reaction to the call made by the ILO in its 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and in the Global Jobs Pact of 2009. As we set ourselves to work now on a Recommendation on the social protection floor, we believe that the road to preventing or reducing social exclusion, poverty and vulnerability, as experienced every day by informal workers around the world, will be long.

StreetNet would like to draw the attention of the Members of this Organization to the role which local government should play in creating bodies to promote decent work and social protection for

workers in the informal economy. We encourage governments to include local authorities in their Decent Work Country Programmes and programmes on social protection floors.

We encourage them to adopt local economic development strategies that facilitate maintaining existing work and means of subsistence and promote innovative local social protection schemes. We would like to raise their awareness of the negative short-term consequences that efforts to achieve social inclusion can have, resulting in the destruction of means of subsistence for the most vulnerable workers, and encourage them to engage in effective social dialogue with the aim of being fully accountable to civil society. Levels of transparency should be improved in decision-making on development and public resource management, and participation by the most vulnerable workers in finding solutions at local government level should be assured. Such social dialogue should complement other levels of collective bargaining and social dialogue with all social partners, including organized workers within the informal economy.

StreetNet's participation is in response to a strong call from our members who have been excluded for so long from development policies and processes.

Allow me also to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election.

(The Conference adjourned at 6.55 p.m.)

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