



Special sitting

Friday, 8 June 2012, 3.10 p.m.

President: Mr Alburquerque de Castro

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
MR MICHAEL CHILUFYA SATA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

Today the International Labour Conference is honoured to receive the visit of His Excellency Mr Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, accompanied by his distinguished wife, Dr Christine Kaseba.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr Somavia, to welcome our distinguished guest.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL

Mr President, we are greatly honoured to have you with us today, and let me say that in your capacity as a former Minister of Labour, I think that I can also say, “Welcome, welcome home.”

I am also happy to say, “Welcome back” to the First Lady, Dr Christine Kaseba-Sata, who was with us in our African Regional Meeting. Among other expressions of her support for the ILO’s goals, she is a champion for the ratification of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), in your continent; thank you so much for that.

Mr President, your journey to the presidency is marked with impressive milestones. But I would mention in particular persistence and courage, through very difficult and complex times, having even been arrested on several occasions for political reasons.

You played a key role in the democratization process of Zambia, and you came to be known for your hands-on approach as Governor of Lusaka and in your ministerial functions, from local government to Labour and Health.

You took the lead in developing your country’s national gender policy.

The people of Zambia acknowledged your achievements when they elected you President last September. You responded to their trust, shaping a people-centred development agenda, guided by a vision of inclusive development.

Let me quote you: it is driven by a conviction, as you said, that “the recently pronounced economic growth ... is meaningless if it does not make noticeable impact on poverty reduction among our people, especially the youth”.

Then you formulated this idea in very simple terms, saying that what you want is to put “more money in people’s pockets through jobs”.

Employment creation is a high priority for your Government, with full employment featuring prominently in your National Long-Term Vision 2030.

With your Government’s engagement, we have been able to pilot a practical collaboration with the International Monetary Fund on a strategy for employment, decent work and development in Zambia.

You reached a tripartite agreement to promote employment by creating inclusive growth. This is a first for Africa, and points the way towards securing greater coherence in macroeconomic, employment and social protection policies.

We salute your determination to address the issue of youth employment. Critically important is your recognition that the active participation of youth must be the foundation for social and economic development.

And I must say that your country’s youth participated enthusiastically in the Zambian national youth employment consultation which kick-started our worldwide initiative leading to this Conference, at which the youth employment issue is at the heart of the agenda.

The ILO’s partnership with Zambia was deepened and strengthened just a few days ago, when we held a conference in Lusaka on many of these issues.

Mr President – and now we move a little bit beyond the issues of the ILO – this year, in February, your national football team – how do you like that, everybody already knows what I am going to talk about!

Your national football team was proof of the Zambian proverb which says: “When you run alone you run fast. When you run together you run far”. So they ran together and they got very far, all the way to the African Cup – congratulations, Mr President!

So thank you so much for being here to share with us your experience and your knowledge. On a personal note, I would like to say that we have just had lunch with the President, and I have rarely seen a President with such an acute sense of humour on almost every subject. You have left a great impression on me as a person, as a human being, with your gift for being able to transform conversations into something that is light and profound at the same time. Thank you very much for being with us.

HE MR CHILUFYA SATA (President of the Republic of Zambia)

Director-General, First Lady of Zambia, honourable ministers from all over the world and all the civil servants, my colleagues from the labour

movement. I have noticed some Zambian labour leaders and employers and this afternoon I was very impressed when I saw a representative of the Employers walking hand in hand with a representative of the Workers – now that employers do not have enough money to corrupt the workers!

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to address this 101st Session of the International Labour Conference. I also wish to express, on behalf of the First Lady of Zambia, my sincere gratitude to Mr Somavia for the invitation; at the same time let me pay tribute to him as the outgoing Director-General for his great contribution to our Organization. Mr Somavia's commitment and passion in promoting the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda across member States during his tenure of office has been outstanding. We commend him for that.

On behalf of the Zambian people, and on behalf of the First Lady, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Guy Ryder on his election. By coincidence, my Vice-President is Guy, but not Ryder, but Scott. We pledge our support to him. Guy Ryder is a household name to our tripartite family. He is well known to us and we have confidence that the wealth of knowledge and experience that he brings will build on the many successes of the International Labour Organization for the benefit of the whole world.

I was invited to come and address this Conference on the theme of promoting decent work for young people. I should say promoting decent work for people, for everybody – because why should we only have decent work for young people, not for older people like me? This is a topic that is very close to my heart, although I am not young. I therefore could not turn down the invitation. I was glad to accept it so that I could come here and share our story with you.

As many of you may be aware, we were voted into office after elections held on 20 September 2011. At that time, our country boasted of positive macroeconomic indicators, and economic growth averaged over 6 per cent. There was a significant increase in copper prices which had led to better export earnings; inflation was below 10 per cent. To add to this, the World Bank, during the same year, reclassified our country from being a low-income country to a middle-income country.

As an opposition candidate for ten years, I travelled throughout the country and spoke to people of all ages, and in all these areas I must say thank you to the First Lady, who survived the provocation every day, because she was trained as a doctor. She would stand that. I do not encourage her to become a politician.

What I saw in people's lives, and what I see today, did not reflect the good economic statistics that we have been boasting about. The young people who had registered en masse to vote had no jobs; taxes were high, but public entities were delivering poor services. In my party's manifesto, we made a pact with the people: lower taxes, more jobs and more money in your pocket. We focussed our campaign on these three issues and we have paved our legacy and re-election on these pledges. The Zambian people overwhelmingly gave us their vote. Young people paid a determining role in putting us in office.

The question you may therefore ask, is "How is the new Government addressing the challenges that young people are facing?"

Firstly, as already stated, in the last decade, Zambia has recorded positive macroeconomic indicators but there has not been any corresponding positive impact on the most vulnerable groups, especially the young and women, because there are some young women, but I would like to classify the women in their own right.

In addition, the majority of the employed youths are engaged in low productivity economic activities, with some in subsistence agriculture and in the informal sector. The goal of our Government is therefore to achieve higher and sustainable economic growth that will uplift the lives of our people and the other vulnerable groups in our country. To this end, given that issues of the youth are cross-cutting, the Government has adopted a multisectoral approach in this regard.

In line with our party manifesto, we have, among other measures, set out to do the following: expanding education facilities and vocational training to absorb school leavers; cooperating with industry to provide apprenticeship; establishing a microcredit financing facility to develop small-scale youth enterprises; facilitating access to market opportunities by small and medium-sized enterprises; and re-orientating the curriculum for primary and second schools to put emphasis on the skills subject to enable us to cope with the demands of self-employment and the labour market.

I mentioned this morning to the leaders of industry and money when I met them. In addition we are working on diversifying the economy. As a country we have, for a long time, been dependent on one resource, which is copper mining. We are determined to move from reliance on copper to other sectors such as manufacturing, tourism and agro-industry, which can create more employment for the youth and other people.

We have planned to increase investment in infrastructure and employ labour-based technology to ensure that such investment leads to more jobs being created. We will stay truthful to our election promise by upholding the principles of good political governance.

An advance in ways of fighting corruption will be a priority for our Government in order to build confidence in our people and enhance access to resources and participation in the development process of the country, especially among the youth.

Zambia is committed to regional integration programmes aimed at enhancing the welfare of the people. For this reason we are fully engaged in the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite discussions and look forward to its operationalization. For trade to have real impact in terms of economic benefits, it must be accompanied by measures targeted at enhancing productivity, job creation, value addition, respect of labour standards and diversification.

Zambia therefore looks forward to progress in integration that will lift millions of our people out of poverty.

Enhancing dialogue with key partners is crucial to getting the right policies in place. We believe that the youth, women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups have to be given a voice in important fora, including politics.

Our vision is to effectively integrate such groups in national development. This is in line with the

mandate of the International Labour Organization as reflected in the Decent Work Agenda.

For your information, for many years, or 50 years since Zambia became independent, we have neglected our womenfolk. But you will be interested to know that this Patriotic Front (PF) Government has more women in prominent positions. For example, the Inspector-General of Police is a woman; the commanding officers of divisions are women; the Drug Enforcement Commissioner is a woman; the Anti-Corruption Commission has a woman; and I have two women Permanent Secretaries, and even among these people sitting there, you have seen that very beautiful lady, that is our Permanent Representative in Geneva. And when you look among those who are sitting there, apart from the trade unions, we have a female doctor. All those who have faulty kidney problems, you can go to her when we adjourn. She will sort you out. And the First Lady can sort out those who have gynaecological problems.

We know that when we are talking about youth, our women have suffered a setback. In the elections they fought en masse, they fought more than men; they have been in the forefront since we started the struggle for independence and in Zambian Government we have given them prominence and we will continue giving them prominence.

In this regard, I am glad to note that the International Labour Organization and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) included Zambia among two other countries, namely Bulgaria and the Dominican Republic, as the three pilot countries where dialogue on economic policies that create employment should be promoted – and we are waiting for you to come.

I wish to point out that the Policy and Dialogue Conference on a new growth strategy for employment, decent work and development was held in Zambia last May. The Conference, attended by the IMF, the World Bank, trade unions, employers and youth, adopted a plan of action as part of a pilot programme.

This plan of action proposes, among other recommendations, the review of the existing social mechanism in Zambia to include such key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Finance and the youth.

While our Government remains committed to the Global Jobs Pact, I would like to appeal to the Director-General to strengthen the ILO field office in Zambia to enable us to effectively support such initiatives, including the implementation of a Decent Work Country Programme in Zambia.

I would like to emphasize that the problem of youth unemployment is critical and knows no boundaries. The aspirations of the youth are common, irrespective of race, culture and creed, as they all want to be active participants in the affairs and future of our nations.

There is, therefore, need to build a strong global partnership on youth employment, regardless of the adverse and regional situations.

It is our expectation that participants will adopt practical recommendations that will address the problems of the youth unemployment, social protection of vulnerable groups and fundamental principles and rights at work.

I wish you all well in your deliberations and thank you.

Original Spanish: The PRESIDENT

The International Labour Conference has listened attentively to your words, and we have duly noted the profound interest in social, labour and spiritual matters that you have brought to your Presidency, with a view to economic integration, political stability and maintaining peace in your region.

On behalf of my fellow Officers of the Conference, of all those of us present here and on my own behalf, I would like to convey to you once again our very sincere thanks for having honoured us with your visit.

(The Conference adjourned at 3.40 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Page

Special sitting

Address by His Excellency Mr Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia	1
--	---

.....
: This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of the ILO's activities and :
: contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings :
: and to avoid asking for additional ones. All ILC documents are available on the Internet at www.ilo.org. :
: