



Eighth sitting

Friday, 10 June 2011, 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr Hernández Sánchez

**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 German: Mr SOMMER (Worker, Germany)

The Report of the Director-General of the ILO contains accurate descriptions of the social situation of people and the labour markets four years after the start of the global financial and economic crisis. Workers and their families everywhere are still suffering the consequences of the crisis and inappropriate policies for surmounting it. Whether in terms of job losses, cuts in social benefits, mistaken initiatives to impose more flexibility as regards workers' rights, or higher taxes and social charges, it is the workers who are bearing the major burden of the damage control measures made necessary because of the unbridled greed of the banks.

The crisis has demonstrated to us where unregulated financial and trade markets lead. It is now high time to shape a new global era of social justice. Even though I basically welcome the Director-General's optimism, I have to note that we are still far away from our goal of a socially fair globalization and we are not safe from the danger of relapsing into the old thinking embodied by the Washington Consensus.

If such a new era is to take shape, it must be actively created by us. The ILO must not confine itself to offering help here and there. It must be the main driving force for greater social justice and assume an active role in that process. Workers throughout the world expect the ILO to assume a leading role. It should remember its traditional strengths and once again become an institution for standard setting. It should define internationally valid labour and social standards and monitor them effectively. That is why we are all here.

I am particularly happy that this 100th Session of the Conference will produce a new Convention for more than 100 million domestic workers, which will give these hard-working men and women more rights. We must, however, also recall that this important Convention is the last such instrument on the ILO's agenda for the time being. We do not have any further standard-setting initiatives in preparation. It is a matter of some concern that the

Director-General does not indicate what plans there are for new standards, although there are more than enough situations requiring such attention from this Organization.

I would mention just two in particular. Precarious and informal labour are the very antithesis of decent work and undermine any effort to create social protection and justice. To combat precarious employment in all its forms must be the mission of the ILO. It is high time to promote appropriate standards as a line of defence against the continual devaluation of work.

Another point concerns the recent political upheavals in North Africa. These were started by young people who took to the streets not just for the sake of democracy but also for their own future prospects. Their courage should be an incentive for the ILO to take action against the scandal of youth unemployment by bringing in a set of clear standards.

The ILO must be the guarantor of the rights and protection of workers. For this, the ILO's regional and country offices must do a great deal more to publicize and promote labour and social standards. They should never make common cause with local elites responsible for violating workers' basic rights. The ILO's representatives must make themselves visible and audible out in the real world as representatives of a system of global human rights.

The ILO should be the preeminent institution for the world of work. It should be the voice of the world of work vis-à-vis the other institutions of global governance.

The window of opportunity for this is wide open. The G20 governments, under pressure from the unions, have called on the ILO to cooperate in creating a new and fairer world economic order. At the negotiating table of the G20, the ILO now has a duty to deliver; if it fails to do so, global policy will be made without it. If global policy is made without the ILO, it will pay no attention to social rights.

In the interests of coherence, the ILO has established contacts in recent years with the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. This is a good thing. The ILO must, however, more than before, be the global guardian against the old policy paradigms of the Washington Consensus. In order to take the leading role in the global debate, it must have its own intellectual position. Expertise on the world of work is at the very heart of our ILO's being, and we should make more use of it in our dealings with other institutions of global governance.

It is true that the values and policies of the ILO are needed more than ever now, and this important Organization must be strengthened. I therefore support the Director-General's call for reflection and discussion on the ILO's role in the future, and I am very willing to make my own constructive contribution to this debate.

Original Spanish: Mr MARTÍNEZ (Worker, Argentina)

We concur with the Director-General when he highlights in his Report that social justice is the main objective of the ILO and that the fight for social justice is one led by workers.

There is a social crisis because there can be no social justice alongside policies designed to reduce wages and increase labour flexibility. We believe that the ILO should be a part of the G20, but we need to be careful not to lend credence to positions which only lead to more adjustment, diminished labour rights, increased unemployment, poverty and marginalization.

The world faces a choice between financial capital and the capital of the real economy of production and labour. Indeed, as the Director-General says, we cannot afford to get it wrong. We need to recognize the nature of the times in which we live, because, once again, we have people out on the streets. The voices of our region are calling for a sincere approach regarding the Bretton Woods financial institutions. They are solely dedicated to defending financial capital and they are not developing the necessary policies to improve the living conditions of ordinary people.

On our continent, we have had years of democracy and, whenever the democratic system weakens, or is attacked, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) responds rapidly in order to defend democratic institutions and continuity. The same cannot be said for social and productive development. We feel we have to point this out because, in some countries rather than being an instrument of policy at the service of mankind, the economy takes precedence.

In certain nations, democracy has not been achieved. There is violence, death, trade union persecution, and a lack of social dialogue and freedom of association and collective bargaining. The State should promote collective bargaining, protect freedom of association, fight against informal employment, rebuild a waged society and use the real economy as a foundation for future progress. Only in this way will the social dialogue have the necessary scope to be effective.

We call for coherence in the international system, not just in the form of official statements, but also through concrete actions against the systemic violation of fundamental rights.

In Argentina, we have ongoing collective bargaining, which goes hand-in-hand with the increase in activity and employment, the strengthening of the minimum wage and the fight against labour informality. We also have universal child allowances and access to pensions.

A great deal of progress has been made but much remains to be done. We need to put an end to poverty and marginalization, as well as the unemployment that still affects sections of the population. To this end, the Argentine trade union movement as a whole calls for the establishment of a social and economic development council as a necessary tool for the discussion of state policies designed to put

an end to the outstanding social debt. We believe in the importance of the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and, as workers, we want to make it clear that the minimum floor should not be used to force the workers to pay for the crisis. The ILO needs to address the issues of the most vulnerable sectors. It is for this reason that we support the Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers.

Finally, as you said in your Report, Director-General, if we want a world of social justice, we cannot be held hostage by an idealism which is impossible to achieve. I would like to quote José Ingenieros, a well-known Argentine writer, who said this: "Ideals are necessary in order to achieve the possible". Workers have the ideal of social justice and, as happened in Argentina, there are ways of making social justice a reality if there is the political will, resolution and courage. The time for social justice has come, the time of the workers.

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

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this session of the International Labour Conference representing the Government of Sri Lanka, headed by His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka.

As you are all aware, the Conference brings together diverse countries: large and small; developed and developing; and with a range of experiences in their efforts to promote decent and productive work for both women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

On behalf of the Sri Lankan delegation, I wish to thank the Director-General of the ILO for his invaluable and stimulating Report, *A new era of social justice*, which provides a comprehensive policy framework on that theme. The Government of Sri Lanka continues to support the ILO in its work on the identified priority areas.

We, the member countries of the ILO, are at different stages of development and the problems encountered by each member in their process of socio-economic development vary. Therefore, the strategies that need to be adopted to address existing and future challenges, particularly in the labour market, should also vary.

Despite these differences, it is our duty to work towards enhancing and uplifting the living and working conditions of our people. Hence, we have to formulate appropriate policies which are coherent and strategically focused and have sound implementation mechanisms, while eliminating all forms of discrimination as we move towards the achievement of social justice. In this context, the role of the ILO is extremely vital and we request the ILO administration to be receptive to proposals from member States and to support them in this common endeavour.

Political stability and an environment that is free of terrorism are long-felt needs and are fundamental requirements for the rapid advancement of a country; this has now been permanently established in Sri Lanka.

The Mahinda Chintana Vision for the Future of Sri Lanka, of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka, provides the right framework for building a disciplined and law-abiding society that will ensure equal treatment for all citizens of Sri Lanka. It emphasizes that the

women of the country should not only be afforded equal status, but also higher priority.

Fundamental rights of all citizens are guaranteed by our constitutional provisions, including the right to choose an occupation. The Constitution of Sri Lanka, in terms of legislative protection against discrimination in employment and occupation, has clear provisions for the protection of all employees against direct or indirect discrimination in both the private and public sectors.

Sri Lanka has so far ratified 40 ILO Conventions, including the eight core Conventions, and has been taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures for their domestic application.

Apart from the general labour administration mechanisms, the Women and Children's Affairs Division of the Department of Labour, the National Institute of Labour Studies, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the Social Dialogue Unit and the Gender Bureau are examples of special entities established under the purview of my Ministry that work to achieve industrial peace and harmony through workplace cooperation and to improve the working conditions of employees.

We have identified a few practical limitations in the process of implementing Conventions with regard to labour administration. But we are confident that these limitations will be overcome. We are also confident that we will be able to achieve social justice by improving the working and living conditions of our citizens, while enhancing productivity through leadership, knowledge, dialogue and cooperation within the acceptable time period.

This would not be possible without the continued support of all stakeholders, such as the workers and employers of my own country and of the international community. Therefore, it is my humble request to all of you to extend your fullest cooperation and support to the Government of Sri Lanka in developing Sri Lanka as a role model for the Asian region.

Original Spanish: Ms ANDERSON NEVAREZ (Worker, Mexico)

It is a great honour for me to take the floor as a Workers' delegate from Mexico and as a member of the Governing Body until yesterday. At this 100th Session of the International Labour Conference, I would like to look back over the history of the ILO – one of the most highly respected organizations in the world.

In 1919, the fields of Europe were still blood-stained, its cities lay in ruins, and the world was beset by crisis and unemployment, the International Labour Organization was born out of the dream of Robert Owen, a Welsh textile manufacturer who, in 1816 in Scotland, put forward the idea of international labour law. Thus was born the ILO, which now has 183 member States, with new countries joining every day.

Mexico – our country – joined in 1931, when Plutarco Elías Calles was President. In 1941, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) joined the Workers' group, and in 1955, the first ILO office opened in Mexico; it is still in operation today. In 1959, the President of Mexico, Adolfo López Mateos (the former Labour Secretary), sent two distinguished representatives, historic figures, to the ILO, Fernando Illanes Ramos representing the employers and Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga of the CTM representing the workers, bearing a gift to the ILO – a statue of the great hero of Mexican inde-

pendence of 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. This stone statue stands on the grassy slope of the Avenue Appia, pointing, to the entrance to the ILO.

Allow me to pay tribute to these two Mexicans, who for many years were members of the Governing Body, Fernando Illanes Romas and Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga, at this 100th Session of the International Labour Conference.

The tripartism practised in this institution has been crucial and beneficial to the workers. This is one of the international organizations in which the worker stands on an equal footing with employers and governments, with the same rights of expression and freedom of speech, and can put forward ideas and proposals, to ensure that labour benefits not only the worker, but also the employer who pays for it, and the government which protects it.

Tripartism has become an example in our countries. In Mexico, we have tripartism in social security and in many institutions linked to the world of work – the National Workers' Housing Fund Institute (INFONAVIT), the National Pension Fund System Commission (CONSAR), the National Workers' Consumption Fund (FONACOT) and the Consumer Protection Agency.

Thus, the social dialogue now practised in most countries was also born of the ILO. It is thanks to tripartism and social dialogue that we have international Conventions to benefit workers and to ensure that there is justice and equality in the world of work, so that employers, too, enjoy security in the workplace and governments are able to progress.

This is the ILO. And today, as we celebrate the 100th International Labour Conference, I would like for all of us to commend the most highly respected Organization in the world – the International Labour Organization.

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

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to be here at the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Once again, I find myself in Geneva, and a year has passed since I was last here, and many things have happened in my country, Mauritius, ever since then. We have a commitment to tripartism; we have a commitment to social dialogue; we have underlined all those commitments of ours by bringing important changes to our way of doing things and our regulations in Mauritius in the recent past.

We have recently created the National Tripartite Forum, which underlines our belief in tripartism, where government, representatives of workers and representatives of the employers all sit together in order to discuss issues and take matters forward.

Soon, we will be calling the National Tripartite Forum again in order to discuss important amendments that are going to be brought to our labour legislation. We have also passed new regulations in order to show our commitment to the protection of the life and working conditions of migrant workers in Mauritius. Only recently, there were 11 workers from Bangladesh who passed away in a tragic road accident in Mauritius. Those workers had come to Mauritius in order to help us in our country to achieve more economic growth. What I would like to do today is to place on record and underline the spirit of solidarity of the people of Mauritius, who came together as one people to stand behind the families of the deceased, those Bangladeshi de-

ceased who were migrant workers in Mauritius, and financially contributed to the upliftment of the families of the deceased.

In the same spirit, allow me to comment here on the plight of millions of migrant workers all over the world. When we talk about justice, when we talk about fairness, it is shocking indeed to see that in the recent past there have been many conflicts in the northern African region and in the Arab world, but there are countries that take the decisions to go and attack or bomb or put a lot of military arms together in order to come and make a statement of some sort in northern Africa without getting into the merits or the demerits of what they are doing. But what we seem to be forgetting, is not only the plight of the workers of that country, but also the plight of the millions of migrant workers who sometimes have to pay a heavy price to go to those countries and expect to make a living for their families back home. They find themselves in drastic conditions – no work, no social security protection, no salary to bring home to their country when there is an attack and a conflict. That is why, today, I would like to call upon the international community, that the ILO must take the lead in such a process whereby all governments have to get together in order to see to it that some sort of financial instrument is devised in order to compensate all those millions of migrant workers worldwide who find themselves stranded and stuck because of things which they did not decide. They have to be compensated financially.

Allow me also here to comment on a very important issue for Africa, which is the 1986 proposal for amendment to the ILO Constitution. Africa has been the victim of colonization and has been the victim of the scourge of slavery for many years, and it is time for us to rectify history. One way to rectify history would be for all countries that have not ratified this instrument to do so.

I would like to conclude by thanking the ILO for its collaboration and the commitment in Mauritius, and I am sure we will soon be signing the Decent Work Country Programme in order to further our collaboration with the ILO.

Ms KEARNEY (*Worker, Australia*)

In opening this historic Conference, the Director-General has called upon all ILO constituents to commit to a new era of growth based on social justice and sustainable development. Australian trade unions welcome this call and are committed to working to realize this vision and these values within Australia and within our region.

Like our counterparts internationally, Australian unions and the millions of Australian workers we represent are committed to fighting not only for better wages and better rights and conditions of work at the workplace, but for a fairer society and economy. We share the ILO's vision of a model of economic growth based not on short-termism, growing inequalities and on the shifting of risks from governments and employers onto workers and their families, but rather on the equitable distribution of the gains from economic growth, on social justice, on fairness and sustainability.

In his Report, *A new era of social justice*, the Director-General identified a number of profound challenges that face us in this the post-global economic crisis world. These include youth unemployment, high levels of precarious and informal work, stagnant levels of world investment in the

real economy, and pervasive and rising levels of income inequality.

A number of these themes resonate particularly strongly with Australians, including the high levels of wealth concentration in the world today.

In Australia today, the wealthiest 20 per cent of Australians own 61 per cent of the wealth; and the poorest 20 per cent own just 1 per cent of the wealth. As in many other countries, the gap between the wealthiest in our society and everyone else is widening rather than narrowing.

In recently commissioned research, the Australian Council of Trade Unions found that Australians dramatically underestimate the extent of wealth inequality in our society. We also found that, regardless of levels of personal wealth, Australians want a much fairer and more equal society and, while this gives us hope, it also underscores the challenge we have before us if we are to make this fairer society a reality.

For Australian unions, the task of pursuing decent work and an economic growth path based on rights, social justice and sustainable development is of particular importance not just in our own country but also in our region, the Pacific.

Although Australia weathered the global economic crisis reasonably well, we live in a neighbourhood made up mostly of developing countries that were very hard hit by the crisis. Pacific Island countries saw demand for their exports decrease, a reduction in tourism, a drop in overseas investment and a fall in remittances. These developments only exacerbated the decent work deficits already faced by many of these smaller countries.

Despite the challenges, there are industries and sectors in the Pacific with significant potential for growth. These include tourism, transport, agriculture, fishing, mining, energy and public services. For countries like Papua New Guinea, extensive natural resources also present opportunities for economic growth. But it is essential that policies are put in place to ensure that growth in these and other sectors, and the economic opportunities they present, directly benefit Pacific Islander workers and their families.

As the Director-General reminds us in his Report, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is a key means through which to pursue a vision of better, more inclusive and more sustainable growth.

In this context, the Australian Council of Trade Unions has welcomed the Australia-ILO Partnership Agreement, which funds ILO projects in the Asia-Pacific region. Among the projects sponsored under this Agreement are industry-led activities focused on promoting decent work in the Pacific. Under the auspices of this Agreement, the social partners have begun working with Pacific Island countries to improve employment outcomes for Pacific Island workers in both the transport and tourism sectors – promoting growth in sustainable industries while at the same time building and strengthening tripartite networks across the region.

It is hoped that this important work will begin to address the significant challenges of unemployment and underemployment in the region, and help provide predictable and adequate incomes to working families.

Of course, a key element of decent work is respect for workers' rights. The Australian trade union movement is deeply concerned by the deteriorating human and trade union rights situation in Fiji. Trade

unionists in the country and their families – and increasingly ordinary Fijians – are living in a climate of fear and intimidation; and the Fijian authorities, systematically and by decree, are curtailing and suppressing human rights and freedoms, including fundamental labour rights and rights of assembly and of expression. They are also engaged in a concerted and insidious campaign to weaken Fijian trade unions.

The Australian union movement is deeply troubled by these developments. We take this opportunity to call upon the ILO and its constituents to do all that they can to encourage Fiji to abide by its obligations as an ILO member State and to respect the fundamental rights of Fijian workers.

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

I would like to thank the Director-General for his timely Report entitled *A new era for social justice*.

The Director-General's Report addresses basic concerns, as most societies striving to ensure that economic and social development complement each other. A social perspective on development requires addressing poverty in all its dimensions, and promoting a people-centred approach to poverty eradication. It also advocates the empowerment of people to ensure their full participation in all aspects of life, especially in the formulation and implementation of policies that affect the poorest and the most vulnerable segments of society.

Ethiopia's relentless efforts in poverty reduction demonstrate that a transformation at national level is vital to reduce current levels of poverty, on the basis of sustainable and equitable economic growth, providing people with access to productive resources. A broad consensus is maintained on this priority agenda, and policies and strategies are being implemented to this end.

Ethiopia has been registering rapid and equitable economic growth, and has now embarked on a five-year Growth and Transformation Plan to maintain and build on important achievements. The major pillars identified by the Growth and Transformation Plan for sustaining rapid and broad-based growth include agricultural and rural development, industry, infrastructure, social and human resources development, good governance, and democratization.

The Plan also provides for a strategy to mobilize domestic financial and human resources, as well as improving domestic savings, to secure the required resources for the implementation of the Plan.

I would like to reiterate Ethiopia's determination to overcome the challenges hindering our social development endeavours. With regard to social protection, one of the basic aspects of social development, the Government of Ethiopia has taken various steps to address economic inequalities and social exclusion, such as the provision of alternative care to vulnerable groups and benefits aimed at preventing risks and livelihood shocks.

In addition to national initiatives, the country has also endorsed the African Union's Social Policy Framework and, in response to regional endeavours, a national social policy platform has been established, as a first step towards a more comprehensive social protection system in the country.

Ethiopia attaches the utmost importance to social dialogue and tripartite consultation. We believe that cooperation between workers, employers and the Government ensures a degree of social peace that

can set the stage for healthy economic and social development.

In this context, I have the honour to inform this august assembly that Ethiopia has deposited with the ILO the instrument of ratification of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), adopted on 28 April 2011 by the Council of the People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. This demonstrates Ethiopia's commitment to social dialogue and to international labour standards for social and economic progress.

Ethiopia remains fully committed to implementing ILO labour standards and working closely with the International Labour Office to enhance the capacity of the country to meet its international obligations. Ethiopia is also determined to further strengthen its engagement with the ILO, in a drive to intensify the implementation of employment creation and social protection targets of the Growth and Transformation Plan, and to ensure a more holistic and objective engagement with the ILO, as part of our determination to meet all Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the ILO for its continued engagement with my country and I wish this Conference every success.

Mr PEIRIS (*Employer, Sri Lanka*)

It is an honour for me to address you at the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference, which is a milestone in the history of the ILO.

As the Employers' delegate from Sri Lanka, I am happy and proud to represent the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, which is one of the oldest employers' organizations in Asia, having been in existence for the last 82 years.

During this period, our organization has promoted ILO standards with the objective of balancing efficiency and equity in employment.

As we look at the past, we do appreciate and acknowledge the role the ILO has played in bringing together the three important stakeholders in employment. We thank the ILO for all the support and assistance it has given its constituents over the years.

As we deliberate on our strategies to build a future with decent work, I am convinced that the ILO needs to address some fundamental issues more closely than before.

As regards adopting labour standards and making recommendations on the application of standards, it is extremely important that the ILO takes cognizance of the peculiar industrial relations cultures of each country.

It is important to take into account that a "one size fits all" approach cannot be maintained in applying universal standards in countries with different levels of economic development.

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon, as the principal employer organization in Sri Lanka and a constituent of the ILO, respects the concept of decent work and has already put into practice the strategic objectives that it identified in terms of Sri Lanka's decent work agenda.

However, we are firmly of the view that operationalizing decent work is what is important. That being so, we need to look at its practical application at the enterprise level, which is where the work is performed and the employment relationship exists.

A crucial requirement for the promotion of decent work is the creation of an enabling environment for employment generation.

We are glad that this year's Global Report is focusing on the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

We are extremely happy to record that Sri Lanka has set up the first Employer Network on Disability in Asia, with the assistance of the ILO. This Employer Network on Disability has already provided employment to more than 400 disabled persons. It has recently set up a training centre for the visually handicapped on IT skills, with the intention of providing these job candidates with the necessary skills to open up employment opportunities.

These are concrete examples of our commitment to promote decent work and a more inclusive workplace where no groups are marginalized but, instead, all are brought into the mainstream of work.

We strive to walk the talk.

As the ILO ventures into the future, it is important that it focuses on developing sound relations at the enterprise level and that, at the same time, it emphasizes enterprise competitiveness and pays greater attention to such issues as productivity and quality, flexible working hours and social dialogue.

Equal treatment in employment necessarily requires that these conditions be met.

It is also important that the ILO focuses on assisting constituents in promoting and attaining ILO's standards, taking into account the peculiarities and the vulnerabilities of each country.

We cannot accept the application of uniform yardsticks to universal standards. There needs to be consideration of practical realities of each country in the application of universal standards.

Whilst congratulating the ILO on the work it has done in the past, we are confident that it will step into the future with renewed vigour and vitality and continue to be a source of strength and inspiration to the tripartite constituents.

Original Spanish: Mr PUIG (Minister of State for Labour, Dominican Republic)

Throughout the planet there is uncertainty with regard to the processes of economic recovery following the global financial crisis. There are still millions of people who have not found employment. The crisis has shown us that we are witnessing the culmination of the globalization model characterized by high levels of inequality in income distribution, both between countries and within countries.

The crisis also highlights the failure of an economic policy vision which overestimates the capacity of markets to regulate themselves while belittling the role of the State and neglecting the environment and the provision of public services and goods.

As we have said on other occasions, the ILO has made major contributions to changing this development paradigm. One example is the adoption of the Global Jobs Pact based on the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. This Pact has been welcomed by the international community and has played a crucial role in defining comprehensive and coherent policies to handle the global economic crisis.

ILO coordination with multilateral cooperation institutions and agencies is of crucial importance in seeking creative and innovative responses to re-define a new architecture for international economic

relations based on a fairer and more balanced vision of development.

In our particular case, the rhythm of economic growth has been affected by the global financial crisis. Nonetheless, thanks to a process of social dialogue and the adoption of relevant social and economic measures, our country achieved GDP growth of 7.8 per cent in 2010, which made it possible to maintain employment levels. At the same time, the social security system in the Dominican Republic has been strengthened, with an increase both in the number of beneficiaries and in the services offered to our members. We have also extended various social services targeting the poorest sectors of the population.

The Dominican Republic adopted the Global Jobs Pact and the Labour Ministry has made decent work a core objective in the Strategic Plan 2008–12, while laying down in a coherent, comprehensive manner the following specific objectives: observance of labour standards; better and more employment; strengthening the social security system; and equality of opportunities and non-discrimination in the workplace.

Furthermore, the Dominican Government has given impetus to a broad-based consultation process to draft the national development strategy for the coming 20 years to achieve decent work for the majority of the population. This is one of our core objectives.

The Dominican Republic is one of four countries in the world which have been selected for a pilot plan in the wake of the joint ILO–IMF conference held in Oslo in 2010. The main objective of this pilot plan is to achieve clear linkage between macroeconomic and labour policies. We trust that this plan will allow us to show how important it is to put employment at the heart of public policy.

In terms of active employment policy, the National Employment Service (SENAE) has been strengthened by opening ten new regional employment offices, making job placement and guidance services more accessible to the population. Likewise, the successful “Youth and Employment Programme” has continued and this has benefited over 55,000 young people, facilitating their integration into the labour market.

In the Dominican Republic we have kept social dialogue alive and the most recent result has been a 17 per cent increase in the minimum wage for the majority of workers. In the context of the National Employment Commission, a discussion process has been initiated to draft national, regional and sectoral policies and plans aimed at increasing formal employment throughout the country.

On the other hand, we continue to strengthen a culture of compliance with international standards, and we are making advances in the modernization and professionalization of the labour inspection system. We have set up a comprehensive labour registry system and a labour action division aimed at simplifying procedures and ensuring higher levels of efficiency and quality. Furthermore, in 2010 a total of 28 new unions were registered, 22 new collective agreements were signed, and 61 mediation procedures were carried out in collective labour disputes.

In the major tourist region of the country we are conducting a labour administration pilot project at the same time as running a massive campaign to

raise awareness and disseminate knowledge of labour rights.

The Dominican Government is committed to guaranteeing equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the workplace. To this end it is drawing up a strategic plan for gender equality in the workplace and increasing efforts to avoid, and establish penalties for, labour discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS. Accordingly, the Dominican Government supports the autonomous recommendation on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The Dominican Government also supports the adoption of a Convention and a Recommendation on domestic work enabling the regulation of labour conditions in this sector. In addition, the Dominican Republic is preparing to ratify the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

We firmly believe that we need to step up the pace and broaden the scope of social dialogue. We know that we need major changes in the social and economic order of our country in order to achieve sustainable, comprehensive development leading to a fairer, more cohesive and more harmonious society.

Ms NWE (Employer, Myanmar)

It is a privilege to be here today to speak at the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference, first, as the very first citizen of the newly established Republic of the Union of Myanmar and, second, as the very first female Joint Secretary of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry elected since its establishment in 1919.

As you may know, changes have been made gradually in our country. The elected President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, His Excellency U Thein Sein, has made clear his vision for Myanmar: to turn to national industrialization and to transform the country into a developed, rich one with a lot of employment opportunities and high per capita income by giving all-round encouragement to small and medium-sized enterprises that play an important role in the economy of our country. He also envisages employment opportunities, stabilized commodity prices, and welfare and social security for the convenience of the workers. He also guaranteed that national workers inside and outside the nation would enjoy all rights.

The Myanmar Chamber of Commerce, as an apex private business organization and employer association, is moving forward with a strong commitment towards its members, not only focusing on business benefits, but also practising business ethics. We realize and acknowledge the importance of socio-economic relations between our members and their labourers, while acting as a bridge between the private sector and the Government. We encourage, provide for and enhance awareness among our members so that they can build bridges with their employees, their workers and their labourers – and, together, we do.

In Myanmar, 99 per cent of businesses are small and medium-sized – the middle-class economy, the engine that drives the country's growth and promotes the livelihoods of the people. Only when the middle-class economy grows as a whole will it bring up the grass-roots level to a better standard of living. But our market access has been blocked by

some developed countries, which has a great impact on the development of our small and medium-sized businesses in terms of their international market competitiveness and growth. Subsequently, the lives of people at grass-roots level, who are dependent on them, are adversely affected. We are therefore advocating that you help facilitate our trade with free access to the international community, as a noble humane act to improve the lives of those at the grass roots of Myanmar.

In support of our objective, the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce and Industry is simultaneously holding talks and seminars to raise awareness of the importance of corporate social responsibility among our members. We encourage them to practise corporate social responsibility in their workplaces and we provide consultation and support where needed. One of our members was even named one of the top ten winners of the Asian CSR Awards 2010. Many of us apply our own code of conduct in our workplaces, which is in compliance with universally recognized principles. We strongly urge our members not to practise the use of forced labour or child labour and to treat their labourers as valuable partners in order to grow together, and we pay the utmost attention to these issues.

Developing nations are combating poverty, supporting sustainable development and promoting the idea of good governance. All of these three are intertwined. To develop, we need economic growth. We need business. Without development, we cannot reduce poverty. If we cannot combat poverty, we cannot expect good governance. The root cause is the necessity to create job opportunities with full exposure to the international community, which can then lead us to growth and development and the reduction of poverty.

Since we are all global villagers, I would like to call upon all of you to provide strong support to Myanmar, so that it will be endowed with flourishing business opportunities, which will lead to better livelihoods for its 59 million people, thus fulfilling the duty of the globe. Let us do this for our people, with help from all the people here and with the full support of the people here.

Original Farsi: Mr YARAHMADIAN (Worker, Islamic Republic of Iran)

On behalf of the 10 million workers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I would like to congratulate you on the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference. I also extend my sincere thanks to the Director-General of the International Labour Office and to the secretariat for the excellent quality of the documents produced, particularly the Global Report on equality at work, providing data and input on the problem of discrimination in the work environment.

The issue of discrimination, as dealt with in the Report, in all its dimensions and forms, poses a grave threat against human dignity, with unacceptable consequences that sometimes may be worse than unemployment.

Today the evil aspects of this phenomenon are even more evident in labour relations, owing to the occurrence of irresponsible collaborations. Economic development without social justice will be very fragile, and may cause identity and legitimacy crises for governments, organizations and their respective administrators.

Monopolistic practices and discrimination in the global economy have created new challenges to

global security by aggravating poverty and social strife. Likewise, double standards will result in deepening inequality in national unity, thus leading to the challenging of governments' legitimacy.

It is obvious that the struggle against discrimination in the workplace and in employment should not be narrowly defined and limited solely to the recruitment stage. Now, 53 years after the ratification of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), workers in some countries still face their governments' unwillingness to ratify this Convention. Ironically, the same governments are represented in the Governing Body of the International Labour Office.

Moreover, the global Decent Work Agenda has not crystallized in the national plans and structures of tripartism. I believe the empowerment of workers to fulfil their rights should be embodied within intra-generative tripartite councils. An effective way to restore imbalances between labour markets and social and economic standards would be the dissemination of justice-seeking ideas.

We would like to call the attention of governments and employers to this undeniable fact: for the progress of society it must resolve social conflicts and establish social dialogue. Lack of sufficient attention to this issue will bring about changes in political systems.

Today, the world is witnessing freedom- and justice-seeking movements in North Africa and the Middle East, largely due to the existence of discrimination, despotism and disregard of human ideals. Such movements are calling for changes that would institute social justice, while condemning despotism against human beings.

As a free-spirited Workers' delegate, I sincerely go along with the inspiring statements issued by the ILO Director-General and the secretariat in March and April 2011 in support of the ongoing struggles of the people in North Africa and the Middle East region to attain justice.

Based on tripartite cooperation, the ILO may establish a special technical group under the supervision of the Director-General to make an in-depth study on the existing challenges in our struggle to eradicate discrimination. Such a study may lead to the presentation of new models and institutions to promote the monitoring of administrative mechanisms that could be incorporated into governmental systems. Formulating ethical codes of conduct and instituting voluntary monitoring mechanisms amongst governments, workers, employers and unions may fill some of the policy and administrative gaps and remove discrimination. In order to combat such discrimination, governments are requested to consider certain punitive measures in their legislation. In pursuing its ideals to revamp the guild structures and on the basis of article 25 of the Fifth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan, the worker community of the Islamic Republic of Iran has initiated an intra-generative tripartite dialogue with Government and employers this year to amend the structural and administrative inconsistencies within the framework of the fundamental labour standards, in particular Convention No. 111.

Expressing its best wishes for the success of the Conference, the Iranian worker community is hopeful that the outcome of the collective cooperation and exchange of ideas in the Conference will lead to consensus on developing effective strategies to re-

move discrimination and to establish justice within the framework of global movements.

Original Arabic: Mr SHAHER SA'D (Worker, Palestine)

Allow me to convey the greetings of Palestine and the Palestinian workers. It is an honour for me to address you on the occasion of the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference, this Conference which discusses all the concerns and aspirations of the social partners and establishes laws and standards governing tripartite relations in order to achieve social justice. This Conference, which has adopted laws that have made history, whether in regard to women, child labour, migrant workers, young people or the abolition of slavery.

This Conference, and this Organization, have warned of many economic and financial disasters throughout the world. This year our programme is full of issues of vital importance for workers – the situation of domestic workers, social protection and decent work.

However, in Palestine, we are also striving to achieve a minimum wage, social protection and decent work. This requires a sustained effort in order to achieve a social dialogue resulting in the implementation of everything to which we have agreed in Palestine for the sake of the workers.

This year, we were pleased that trade union leaders from all over the world participated in our May Day demonstration at which we joined our voices in calling for social justice in Palestine and for a minimum wage. Ms Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), participated in the demonstration.

This participation and this solidarity enabled us to organize a series of meetings aimed at establishing a minimum wage.

However, we in Palestine are in a unique situation, as we are still a people living under Israeli occupation, which daily invents new forms of collective punishment, most recently by unleashing settlers in the West Bank to kill, attack and burn the crops of Palestinian farmers. This occupation continues to maintain the blockade on our people in the Gaza Strip, subjecting it to the worst racist siege in history. I refer to the Report of the Director-General, which describes Gaza as a graveyard of industries.

We are also suffering from the apartheid wall and checkpoints, as well as isolation, which have led to an unprecedented rate of unemployment in Palestine. We need stable employment for all the workers of Palestine. We therefore welcome the Report of the Director-General this year, which was honest, professional and transparent. The Report states that the Palestinian people and leadership are ready for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, and that the sufferings of the workers in Palestine cannot end unless the Israeli occupation of our land and nation is removed.

From this rostrum at the 100th Session of the Conference, we appeal to all of you – Government, Employer and Worker representatives – to support us so that Palestine can realize its rights to self-determination and an independent State. We appeal to all the international federations to bring pressure to bear on their governments so that next September, Palestine will be recognized as a full member State of this Organization. We hope that at the next session of the Conference we will be able to partici-

pate as a sovereign State, and not just as an observer.

We have made untold sacrifices, in terms of the dead, the prisoners and the injured, for the sake of freedom and independence. We count on your support in realizing our aspirations, next September, for the sake of a Palestinian State, for the sake of the Palestinian people. We hope that you will support us in the United Nations for the creation of an independent State. This is what I ask of you, and of all the workers of the world.

Original Spanish: Mr BONMATI PORTILLO (Worker, Spain)

This year's session of the Conference is taking place against a particularly negative backdrop for workers. Two years ago, the Conference adopted the Global Jobs Pact, the aim of which was to find a way out of the crisis through economic recovery, the creation of employment and better protection for workers.

Let us recall some of the key points of the Pact: building a supervisory and regulatory framework for the financial sector, so that it serves the real economy; focusing on measures to maintain employment; broadening and strengthening social protection, support to pension systems and increases in the duration and coverage of unemployment benefits; establishing minimum wages; and investing in infrastructure and public goods with a high employment coefficient, among others.

Since then, what began as a financial market problem has ended up leading, particularly in Europe, to austerity policies and budget adjustments, which are having a fundamental impact on workers and undermining the foundations of the European social model. The European Union, despite not having the competency to do so, devised an austerity plan through its governance plan and pact for the Euro, whose entire strategy is based on fiscal austerity and reducing social benefits, wages and collective bargaining. This has not only worsened the social situation in all countries, but has done so on a fundamental level in those, such as mine, whose financial markets are subject to continued monitoring.

The results of all this have been very painful in Spain: a big drop in economic activity, with a subsequent increase in unemployment to 21.3 per cent, with youth employment at over 40 per cent; an increase in the inequality of income distribution; and a reduction in income from tax, which worsens public debt. At the same time, we are continuing to see speculative attacks on the sovereign debt of Spain and other European countries. Similarly, as predicted by the unions, the labour reform imposed by the Government last year has not resulted in an increase in employment; any employment that it did create was precarious. This demonstrates once again that only consensus-based policies can bring about stable and quality employment.

Making social and economic policies subordinate to the requirements of the financial markets, whose objectives include the worsening of labour conditions and public social protection, brings about a clear increase in social inequality, serious obstacles to economic growth, and the abandonment of political projects that the citizens voted for democratically. It is discouraging to see that political priorities aim at satisfying the requirements of the markets, even if this comes at the expense of worsening social rights and collective wealth.

We should all be concerned that some institutions, either directly or indirectly, are forcing many countries, through brutal adjustments, to breach international labour standards. This is unacceptable. In our opinion, the ILO should make a point of reminding these institutions of their moral and political obligation to respect such standards, in particular as their demands do nothing more than adjust the policies that led to the current social disaster.

In our country, social dialogue, which has been a key factor in our recent social history, is in a very bad state. In February, social stakeholders and the Government undertook a number of commitments through the Social and Economic Agreement, which aimed, in an exercise of responsibility, to send out a message of hope to Spanish society about our ability to understand and overcome the crisis through collective efforts and sacrifice. Although we reached an agreement on pensions that would allow their future sustainability, it has not been possible to reach any agreement on collective bargaining because of an inexplicable last minute about-turn on the part of Spanish employers that made any agreement impossible and once again showed that it was political interests and opportunities that prevail over the general interests of our country.

A further negative influence in recent developments has been the ongoing interference of European political institutions which, for the first time in their history, have embarked on intolerable interventionism in areas outside of their jurisdiction.

Spanish trade unions continue to believe in social dialogue and we maintain our commitment to the Social and Economic Agreement, whether with regard to employment, hiring, policies of changing the productive model, improving labour conditions for public sector employees or strengthening collective bargaining, despite the obstacles placed in our paths which, using the crisis as a pretext, bring about unacceptable social regression.

I want to conclude by stating, on behalf of the Spanish workers and, I am sure, on behalf of the entire Workers' group, that I do not understand how we can allow an Employer representative of a country to speak in this plenary when the Worker representative from that same country has not been registered to speak.

Original Arabic: Mr AHMED (Employer, Iraq)

It is a pleasure and an honour for me personally, speaking on behalf of the Union of Iraqi Industry which represents employers in Iraq, to bring you our most sincere greetings and appreciation for the way in which this Conference is being organized, bringing us together as it does every year in a tripartite gathering to engage in international social dialogue. We are able to exchange experiences and take stock of the challenges we face and the successes we have had in promoting labour in the various productive sectors.

We also would like to express our appreciation to the Director-General for the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, devoted this year to discrimination in employment in the member States. This annual follow-up is a vital component in the work of the Organization, as it helps member States to step up efforts to consolidate the fundamental principles and rights laid down in the Constitution and the Declaration. It also helps us evaluate the ILO's success in providing assistance to member States through coopera-

tion activities. We believe that the discussion of the Report during international conferences gives the Governing Body a better overall view of the situation than the reports submitted by member States.

As regards the application of the various different Conventions at legislative level in my country, we have passed many laws to create an adequate working environment and back up the national economy. These include: the amended Investment Act, the Industry Protection Act, the Consumer Protection Act and the Customs Tariff Act. Other legislation is in the pipeline, such as acts on labour and social protection amended in accordance with international standards, and the act modernizing the banking system. The Government is putting in place monetary policies to support the Iraqi currency. Similarly, policies pertaining to employment and an increase in the minimum wage have been adopted to help the most vulnerable members of society. Iraq has also introduced a modern system of social protection that covers a large proportion of the poor and unemployed. All this has helped us reduce poverty and alleviate social tensions, while preventing their recurrence.

The Iraqi Constitution guarantees equality between men and women with respect to employment and wages, and prohibits any form of employment discrimination.

As far as the employers are concerned, we are doing as much as possible to get the private sector back to full strength in Iraq. The Government has granted credits and loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, and has pledged to grant new credits to create jobs for young people and the unemployed. So far, these credits have helped to stimulate the market and create jobs. We hope that the Government will come forward with more plans, legislation and programmes to stimulate the private sector, and will choose a strategic partner for the country's reconstruction, development and decision-making in the economic sphere.

The presence of solid and efficient employers' and workers' organizations is conducive to a favourable working environment. The Government plays an important role in creating this environment by backing the social partners and guaranteeing their freedom. In Iraq, the Government has to cope with combating terrorism and dealing with all the violence that has been part of the life of our country since the occupation and, in that respect, our economy faces many challenges. It is because of these concerns that there has been a delay in taking decisions on issues pending, such as trade union freedoms. The employers and workers' organizations, as well as civil society organizations, have established a constant dialogue with the Government on these matters. We have the support of many national forces and personalities to overcome these difficulties and to organize democratic elections in accordance with international standards.

We should also like to express our gratitude for the assistance provided by the Arab Labour Organization and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and for the understanding they have shown us with respect to our claims. They are demonstrating a democratic stance that is new to us.

We hope that our Government ratifies the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87).

I think that not enough use is made of the Arabic language within the Organization, given the role and size of the Arab group.

We welcome the fact that the Director-General has paid such close attention to the Palestinian cause, sending a mission of inquiry to Palestine and in the occupied territories. We strongly support the Palestinians' right of return and self-determination and ask the Conference to condemn the Israeli practices against the Palestinian people.

I would like to say how very grateful we are to the ILO Regional Office in Beirut, under Ms Nada Al-Nashif, its Regional Director, and we would request that the Office provide more support to the Iraqi people.

Ms SUFIAN (*Minister of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh*)

I congratulate the President on his election at this historic Conference. I also welcome the newly-elected members of the Governing Body of the ILO.

I thank the Director-General for his Report. We agree with him that the world needs a new era of social justice. The ILO and its constituents should take the lead to make this happen.

We must win the fight against global inequalities and poverty. The deep imbalances in the world economy are the root causes of many of our problems.

The international community must close ranks to address these issues. Otherwise, globalization will remain an empty promise for many. The recent financial and economic crisis gave us a dire warning. We cannot go on with business as usual. This is what we said in the Global Jobs Pact.

The political developments in some parts of the world give us new hope. We must match this hope in the world economic order. Market principles need to be wedded to justice and fairness. Social dialogue must include those on the margins of the real economy.

In Bangladesh, we are at the crossroads of a social and economic transformation. Our battle against poverty is far from over, but remains on a winning curve. We are moving forward with *Bangladesh Vision 2021* to build a middle-income country with a knowledge-based economy. Our Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, is leading our nation-building efforts from the front.

This year, the Conference has on its agenda a number of issues close to our heart. The ILO instruments concerning domestic workers are indeed a major development. I salute all the workers, activists, experts and delegates who made this possible. In Bangladesh, at a political level we are utterly committed to ensuring the protection of domestic workers. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has prepared a Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy. Our law enforcement and justice systems are now more responsive to cases of abuse of domestic workers. The Government is directly supervising the recruitment and training of migrant domestic workers.

Social protection is one of the main pillars of our national development efforts. Our Government invests around 2.5 per cent of our GDP in social safety net programmes. These programmes target the very poorest and most vulnerable sections of the population. Under these programmes, 1.5 million jobs will be created in rural areas in the next fiscal year. The Government is considering ways to extend social security coverage through savings and

insurance, health-care provision and other measures.

The issue of labour administration and labour inspection is critical for the protection of labour rights. Our Government is taking measures to build the capacity of the relevant agencies. Additional manpower is being recruited to fill vacant posts in the labour inspectorate and labour courts.

The Government is working with the ILO and the social partners to improve industrial relations management. A high-powered committee has been established to maintain stability in the industrial sectors. All ready-made garment (RMG) units have been asked to set up participation committees to promote social dialogue. The revised minimum wage structure in the RMG sector has led to an increase of 82 per cent, on average, but youth in Bangladesh constitute than one third of our population. The National Education Policy 2010 underlines the need for developing a skilled workforce to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. Our Government is expanding opportunities for technical education and vocational training. A national employment service scheme for young people has been introduced on a pilot basis.

As regards other age groups, the Government has increased the retirement age of workers from 57 to 60. We are presently working on a national plan of action to implement the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010. The Government has set up a specialized bank for our expatriate workers. We had to bring back 38,000 of our migrant workers from Libya recently. Our business community has offered to help find employment opportunities for those returnee workers. We urge the international community to set up a common resource pool to respond to emergency situations faced by migrant workers.

We remain concerned at the impact of climate change on the world of work. We urge the ILO to promote greener jobs as an adaptation mechanism.

The recently adopted Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) calls for job-rich growth in LDCs. We expect the ILO to continue its work with LDCs to foster their growth through the Decent Work Agenda. It is the weakest segment of the world's population that should benefit from the ILO's values and principles, now more than ever.

Thank you. Thanks to all. Long live the ILO. Long live Bangladesh.

Mr RAI (*Worker, India*)

I would like to thank the Director-General of the ILO for his excellent Report, and thank the ILO for taking timely measures to address the global labour situation. We are all proud and happy to gather together and take an active part in this meeting. The ILO has proven its skills in handling the tough global situation.

We all agree that we believe in peace and prosperity for all. However, happiness is not centred only in economics. Its real and permanent place is in the meeting of heart to heart. Unfortunately, globalization has moved in the wrong direction, resulting in a widening gap between the rich and the poor. It is good that the ILO has recognized this phenomenon and has appealed for a fair globalization, decent work and social protection. This is a welcome move. However, this approach cannot be adopted in the majority of the world because the practice of

wage freezes, the curtailment of benefits and facilities and cuts in social protection and social security still continue in most of developing, and even the least developed, countries. Unfortunately, the development process has led to increased levels of corruption and exploitation in certain countries. We require employment-oriented development. Given the current situation, the focus of this session of the International Labour Conference on four issues, namely social protection, domestic workers, labour administration and inspection, and the application of standards, is most justified, and welcome.

The active role played by the ILO in the world has been immensely useful, with regard to retaining a critical balance in an era of faulty global finance. Issues relating to global policy-making and programmes, such as distortions in the international currency rates, skewed trade and tariffs, the policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund with regard to Government spending, international hostilities, the battle against terrorism, etc., are some of the issues of concern to workers. Forward trading on food markets has caused food prices to increase on Indian markets at the highest rate in the region, despite satisfactory harvests, with a negative impact on workers.

Generally speaking, rocketing prices have hit the workers badly. In countries in the southern part of the globe, employment is becoming rarer and cheaper. There have been no gains in terms of decent work, or better wages and working conditions. Wage disparities are growing, while the accumulation of wealth is increasing. In India, the consultative mechanisms are seriously inadequate. At the provincial level, the mechanisms for the implementation of labour legislation are not responsive. However, the consolidated trade union movement is monitoring the deteriorating situation. In order to reduce exploitation, capital and labour should be valued equally and gains should be equally shared.

With regard to domestic work, the world of labour is full of woes. A survey recently conducted by trade unions in India clearly demonstrates that downtrodden domestic workers have even been deprived of almost all social security benefits. Their participation rate is less than 1 per cent. As a result, workers need to be protected by the trade unions. Therefore, in terms of their importance, trade unions should not lose out to NGOs. Let the world remember that labour is not a commodity nor can there be a labour market in the world without workers. Workers are responsible and important social partners.

We appreciate the timely efforts of the ILO in raising the issue of labour rights at work. We feel that it is high time to move ahead with the ratification of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and to grant it an appropriate place in the social structure.

However, we feel confident that the world will take its cue from the synergy generated at this 100th Session of the International Labour Conference, and make this world a better place for workers to live in. Let us remember that we all live under the same blue sky, that we are all equal and that, if we believe that the workers of the world all face the same problems, it is only workers who can call for unity. We therefore call upon the ILO to unite the world. I wish the ILO every success. We believe that the ILO is moving in the right direction.

We in Pakistan appreciate the positive role being played by the ILO through its regional, subregional and Islamabad offices.

Director-General Juan Somavia's historic opening speech at the Conference, with its call for an urgent commitment to a new era of social justice and economic growth based on sustainable development to address mounting turmoil in the world of work, has given me great strength and courage to say what is there in my heart.

In more than 180 countries, the majority of employers' organizations in the ILO are either from underdeveloped countries or developing countries and represent the business community in its entirety. In the light of the services and facilitation they have been expecting from the ILO, we have to see whether the present vision of the ILO is fulfilling the expectations of the majority of the employers from these countries and indeed of all the tripartite constituents. Even now the impact of the financial crisis of 2008 is still continuing in one form or the other. The present scenario of the war against terror has a direct or indirect impact in the countries of the Middle East, South-East Asia, the European Union, the United States and, in particular, my own country, Pakistan, which is making sacrifices for world peace as a front country suffering on account of international emergencies. Furthermore, the fuel and energy crisis in the majority of the underdeveloped countries has drastically affected the business of these countries and is currently food for thought as regards what the vision of the ILO should be and how the tripartite constituents can contribute to this vision.

Let us make every possible effort to resolve the outstanding political issues of underdeveloped countries on a win-win basis which will result in overall economic growth. There are countries which have surplus hydroelectricity or natural gas in abundance and desire to supply their neighbouring underdeveloped countries at a very cheap rate, thereby enhancing the productivity of the underdeveloped economies. But, with regret, owing to vested political interests, it is not allowed in practice in some cases.

I very honestly and humbly request the ILO to improvise its vision in order to address member countries' broader socio-economic issues and play its role in achieving prosperity in the global economy, which is the only solution to all the evils faced by mankind, such as terrorism and poverty.

Permit me to say that in general there is a lack of ethical and responsible leadership, governance, fairness and transparency because of which economic growth is hampered. Employment creation and reduction of poverty are not being achieved, as leadership, knowledge, dialogue and cooperation are the answers to economically and socially efficient growth in demand, as very wisely mentioned by the ILO Director-General.

The matters that I referred to earlier are no longer simply issues for the ILO's constituents, that is, the employers, the workers and the governments, but they have now become integral to the issues of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations, G8 and G20 countries as well. Hence, we shall try through the ILO to advise these bodies to design ways and means to resolve the issues of re-

sponsible leadership, fairness and transparency in governance.

Let us join hands together and achieve the objective of making globalization an opportunity for peaceful coexistence for mankind at large, not an instrument to make the poor even poorer. We must understand that every effort must be made to discourage turning the weaker economies into consumer markets, thus closing their industries as this can result in a major global imbalance.

Reduction, if not elimination, of wastage should be on our agenda. We may consider discussing this in our Governing Body in November and in the regional conference of Asia and the Pacific in Japan in December, and discussing it will provide us with additional resources for promoting youth employment and decent work and reducing child labour and bonded labour.

In Pakistan, we are trying to eliminate and combat child labour and bonded labour through education and skill training. Social protection and youth employment and Decent Work Country Programmes are on our top agenda. The Convention on domestic workers is in the offing, and the next two or three days will mark the history of the ILO when we have this Convention. All the tripartite constituents of Pakistan are supporting this Convention.

Mr SUNMONU (*Representative, Organization of African Trade Union Unity*)

The Organization of African Trade Union Unity is gratified to note that the thrust of the Director-General's Report is in line with our long-standing position about the social and economic injustice of economic neo-liberalism fostered by the Washington Consensus since the 1980s. This right-wing economic ideology was adopted and, unfortunately, is still being practised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It gave birth to the orthodox structural adjustment programmes, which the IMF and the World Bank imposed on African and other developing countries from 1981 to the year 2000.

The Organization of African Trade Union Unity led African trade unions and workers in opposition to the disastrous structural adjustment programmes. I need not repeat here the economic, social and political damage caused to African and other developing countries. Our warnings that anti-people, neo-liberal economic policies were, and still are, unsustainable fell on deaf ears. Now the chickens have come home to roost!

Have any lessons been learnt from neo-liberal economic policies? It does not appear that the apostles of neo-liberalism have learnt any lessons, even from the 2008–09 financial and economic crisis, which the industrialized economies of Europe and the United States of America and the rest of the world are still suffering from. If they had learnt any lessons, they would not have prescribed for Greece, Ireland and Spain the discredited, anti-people structural adjustment programmes that destroyed African economies in the 1980s and 1990s. And I am happy that that evidence was borne out by the statement of the Spanish Workers' delegate.

Our first suggestion for a way forward, particularly for us in Africa, is to "put people first". Secondly, the satisfaction of the basic needs of the people should be the main objective of socio-economic policies and programmes. I have already said, and I would like to repeat from this platform, that we

have nine basic needs: food, housing, health, education, water, electricity, transport (by rail, road, air, sea and inland waterways), communications (press, radio, television and information and communications technology) and decent work.

These nine basic needs can progressively be achieved by a popular participatory and people-empowered government, as enunciated in the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development (Arusha, 1990). This should be accompanied by good governance and social and economic justice, fostered by social dialogue.

The recent and ongoing events in North Africa and parts of the Middle East are a wake-up call for the whole world. One does not have to be a political scientist to know that the trigger of these events was youth, unemployment, poverty, corruption, democratic deficit and social injustice. As a result of these events, the Organization of African Trade Union Unity, in collaboration with the ILO Regional Office, ACTRAV, the Employment and Social Dialogue Sectors, and the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation, organized a three-day capacity-building workshop in Khartoum, Sudan, from 9 to 11 May 2011, on "Youth employment, governance and democracy in Africa: The role of trade unions". The workshop was attended by over 80 top African trade union, youth and women leaders from 38 African countries. It was attended also by the employers from Sudan and Niger. Similar workshops are programmed for trade union, women and youth leaders of West Africa in September 2011 in Abidjan, and for East Africa in October 2011 in Nairobi. National workshops on the same topics will be held in all the African countries when resources become available. These capacity-building workshops are our own modest contribution to the search for decent work, good governance, people-empowered democracy, peace, prosperity, unity and development in Africa.

In this process, we shall use social dialogue with the other social partners and Africa's development partners to achieve our objectives. We shall never again allow our heads to be shaved in our absence. Our people will take the driving seat, never again to remain as passengers in everything that affects our countries and livelihoods.

Before concluding my speech, I would like to express our disappointment at the lack of improvement in the lives of the Palestinian workers and people because of the repressive Israeli occupation of Palestine and Syrian Golan. The illegal building of settlements on Palestinian land and in Syrian Golan is a great obstacle to peace in the Middle East.

We congratulate the leaders of the PLO and Hamas for their recent unity accord, which will strengthen the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation. We thank the new Government of Egypt for opening its frontier with Gaza in order to ease the genocidal blockade imposed on Gaza by the Israeli occupation forces.

The Organization of African Trade Union Unity and African workers appeal to African and other members of the United Nations to support the independent State of Palestine becoming a member of the United Nations family later this year, and to give the necessary financial, material and diplomatic support to the Palestinian nation with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Original Arabic: Mr EL AZZOUZI (Worker, Morocco)

The Director-General's Report reflects the enormous challenges facing the social partners in their pursuit of social justice. It also highlights the inequalities at the workplace as a result of the world economic crisis brought about by the negative effects of neo-liberal economic globalization, particularly affecting the countries of the southern hemisphere. These inequalities mainly take the form of discrimination based on sex, religion, beliefs, race and nationality. One need only consider the suffering of immigrants throughout the world. We appeal for greater support for the countries of the south, especially in Africa.

The Moroccan trade union movement has been struggling for decades for the democratization of the State and of society and for an improvement in the fate of Morocco's working class. As in the rest of the Arab world, our country has been demanding democratic change, and has witnessed the growing awareness of its younger generation in their peaceful efforts to accelerate reform at every level.

The King's speech on 9 March is in keeping with the aspirations of the social forces in the country since he recognizes the need for a complete revision of the Constitution.

The most representative trade unions have also expressed their points of view, and this gives us every reason to hope that the current public debate will lead to the approval of a new democratic and social Constitution that respects fundamental rights and freedoms and promotes international Conventions and the necessary supervisory machinery for combating all forms of corruption and advancing the cause of social justice. Accompanied by political, economic and social reform, this should enable Morocco to join the club of democratic countries.

Social dialogue between the Moroccan Government, employers and workers led to the signing of an agreement on 26 April 2011 to raise minimum wages, reorganize the promotion system, raise pensions and apply sectoral labour Conventions.

The agreement also provides for the ratification of a number of ILO Conventions, notably the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). However, the weakness of collective bargaining in the private sector and non-compliance with the Labour Code continue to raise concerns.

Although the agreement has its weaknesses, it has created conditions that are conducive to trust among the social partners, who we hope will quickly implement it and introduce the necessary machinery.

The situation in the occupied Arab territories has been steadily deteriorating because of Israel's aggressive policies against Palestinian workers and because of the repression, Judaization and colonization practiced by the Israeli occupying forces in Palestine. We invite the international community to stand by the Palestinian community next September in its defence of a universal recognition of the State of Palestine with Al-Quds as its capital.

We endorse the observations and proposals of the Arab group in this Organization. The Arab revolution is a revolution on the part of all Arab countries from the ocean to the Gulf, on the part of a people that is clamouring: "if a nation wishes to live, let destiny bow to their desire and their will". When the people arise, no tanks or planes can stop them. We

salute the martyrs of the Arab world fighting for democracy and a decent life.

Speaking for Moroccan workers, it is our hope these debates will lead to Conventions and Recommendations that will improve the social situation of working people throughout the world and will restore balanced labour relations in the world of work.

Mr CASUCCI (*Worker, Italy*)

The Italian trade unions agree on the analysis of the Director-General's Report, which highlights the challenges that all the ILO constituents face.

We have not emerged from the crisis yet. Unemployment remains high, and there are no favourable prospects in the short term; the austerity measures adopted by governments are mainly aimed at reaching fiscal stability and not implementing the decisions advocated by the ILO in the Global Jobs Pact, supported also by the G20. The report on social security submitted to this Conference makes a clear analysis and suggests specific actions to ensure a Social Protection Floor for all workers, starting from the more socially vulnerable: migrants, unemployed people and young people.

The crisis fuels the precariousness of working relations, weakens trade unions' power of representation and forces millions of young people to experience a professional ordeal that deprives them of future prospects, while labour rights conquered many decades ago are called into question.

European countries are questioning the pillars of the European social model, which had been a reference for economic growth and fair competition in the new globalization era.

The Director-General's Report highlights the growing imbalances and difference in most industrialized and emerging countries. In our opinion, these disparities must be tackled by increasing labour standards and not preventing their implementation and supervision.

We are convinced that the ILO's major task must remain standard setting, but we are equally convinced that we must promote, with greater energy and resources, the adoption of ILO standards, as well as the removal of the obstacles preventing their implementation. We firmly believe that urgent actions are needed to promote the ILO fundamental rules in the G20 countries.

We cannot tolerate that those who want economic rigour are reluctant on the ILO's key role as a standard-setting organization. Weakening this ILO role means relegating it a mere role of study and analysis of labour market developments, and this is not what the workers want.

The youth issue needs internationally shared and coordinated action. A whole generation runs the risk of being marginalized from the labour world, not only in the Arab countries currently experiencing rebellions, but also in European countries. In Italy, a member of the G8, the youth unemployment rate is 30 per cent, with peaks of 40 per cent in the south. The solution to this problem cannot be provided only at national level.

What has become of the ILO "training strategy" to which the G20 and the Governing Body entrusted the response to the employment crisis? What resources have we provided to the ILO and the Turin Training Centre to define this training strategy, which cannot be designed only in theory? The issue does not only lie in revising the ILO budget, but in

following up decisions already taken with a consistent action.

The global crisis still coincides with a severe demographic crisis which hits industrialized countries. Over the last ten years, Europe has tried to bridge this gap with the arrival of millions of migrants.

Often, however, as in Italy, migration has been re-presented as a chaotic phenomenon, fuelled by the underground economy which, in Italy, accounts for at least one fifth of the total. The result of this inability to regulate migration flows is a strong presence of irregular foreign workers, with unavoidable consequences in terms of social dumping.

Today, in Italy, workers coming from third world countries are often discriminated, but for non-documented migrant workers the situation is often unbearable, as shown by the severe problems recorded in the south of Italy. The spreading of social dumping is also associated with discriminatory and racist behaviours, often fuelled by harsh laws and xenophobic media campaigns marked by language often used when reference is made to migrant people.

The new Convention on decent work for domestic workers will be of an historic nature. For the first time, the ILO intends to adopt rules designed to regulate a largely informal sector such as domestic work. Most of the 100 million women and men working in the domestic sector do so often in irregular conditions. Hence, international measures are urgently needed to combat the underground economy and irregular work. Without this, the Convention's implementation would incur difficulties in fighting against the scourge of illegal migration.

The ILO strategy looks to a more democratic and participatory management of economic and social mechanisms, in view of the reduction in wage differentials, the creation of decent jobs for everybody, the fight against poverty and for a fairer and more inclusive globalization.

We hope that the ILO constituents will turn these goals into concrete commitments.

Ms SSENABULYA (*Employer, Uganda*)

On behalf of the employers and business community of Uganda, I thank the Director-General, members of the Governing Body and all ILO staff for the tremendous work they are doing in promoting and upholding the mission and values for which the ILO was established 92 years ago.

The International Labour Organization has religiously performed the functions of setting and monitoring international labour standards that regulate the relationship between employers and workers at the workplace.

As of 31 December 2010, ratification of the fundamental labour standards stood at 1,322, equivalent to 90 per cent of the potential total number of ratifications across 183 member States, according to the Director-General's Report.

This is quite impressive, but there are many Conventions with minimal or no ratification and the implementation of ratified Conventions varies widely. This imposes an enormous challenge on the ILO and its constituents.

It calls for a realistic analysis of the factors inhibiting ratification and innovative ways of promoting implementation. Governments have the cardinal role of translating the provisions of ratified Conven-

tions into their national laws and ensuring enforcement for compliance.

Employers' and workers' organizations can complement governments, most especially in developing countries where they have limited resources. This requires strengthening the capacity of these organizations, hence the need for the ILO to allocate more resources to ACT/EMP and ACTRAV.

Alternative ways of promoting compliance through self-regulation should be explored.

A decade ago the Federation of Uganda Employers introduced awards to recognize employers with the best human resource and business practices. This, coupled with the promotion of corporate social responsibility among enterprises, has contributed to complementing the Government's role of enforcing labour laws in the country.

The Director-General rightly points out in his Report that "the goal of more and better jobs remains a distant reality aggravated by the global crisis".

Countries all over the world are grappling with the challenges of unemployment, although the situation is more serious in developing countries, including Uganda.

The ILO cannot be expected to provide all the solutions, but it can make a meaningful contribution by reviving, remodelling and revitalizing its programme on entrepreneurship development.

Uganda was one of the beneficiaries of the start, improve, and expand your business programmes and they made a real impact.

A new era of social justice should bring on board employers and workers in the informal economy, who are by far the majority in emerging and developing economies.

The informal sector employs more than 50 per cent of the labour force in developing countries. Employers' and workers' organizations have a central role to play in influencing governments to formulate and implement policies that will help businesses to graduate from the informal to the formal sector.

However, most of these organizations are weak and require capacity building in lobbying and advocacy skills. It is important to note that, as long as we have weak organizations, especially in developing countries, the voice of the real economy will continue to be insufficiently heard.

This is currently the case in the EU, ECOWAS, COMESA, EAC and SADC.

The ILO has the daunting task of bringing about a new era of social justice. The task should be embarked upon with a new approach and new lenses and on an equal footing for all social partners.

Original Spanish: Mr MESA (Employer, Cuba)

Despite the efforts undoubtedly made by the secretariat, we regret once again that documents for this session of the Conference were delayed. I refer to the Director-General's Reports. This delay hindered the delegates' preparation and participation. We feel that this should be a priority for the secretariat.

Both the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General's Report, *A new era of social justice*, deal with the strategic objectives and challenges facing the ILO in the near future, focusing mainly on promoting the Decent Work Agenda, greater coherence in economic, financial, social and employment policies at the national and international levels, strengthening tripartite

tism, and ensuring follow-up to the reforms of the Office's working methods and oversight mechanisms and bodies in order to offer better technical assistance to all its constituents.

It is no secret that in order to find a way out of the current crisis, we need a new global economic model which is more fair and balanced, without excessive growth. It should be based on one of the pillars of the ILO, namely social justice, but also on coherent macroeconomic policies which generate not only more wealth but also decent employment accessible to all through the creation of sustainable enterprises, better opportunities for productive investment, and with a responsible financial system and fiscal policies that serve the real economy. We should not forget that globalization and the current technological development are factors that are inter-related and continually evolving. They have a direct impact on labour markets and constitute one of the biggest challenges facing the ILO in the world of work.

From our perspective as employers, we attach great importance to creating wealth and decent employment by promoting national policies which foster the creation of sustainable, competitive and highly productive enterprises, in which the employment and entrepreneurial spirit of the young will be the basis of future economic development.

Our country has not been spared the fallout of the systemic structural crisis currently being experienced by the global economy. The effects have been reflected in the instability of products traded through our companies as well as the impact on demand for exported services and goods and the greater restrictions placed on obtaining external financing because of the Yankee embargo we have suffered for more than 50 years.

Nonetheless, to face these challenges in Cuba, we have approved the key aspects of a social economic policy based on tripartite social dialogue extended to all sectors of the population. These update our economic model, which recognizes and promotes, in addition to sustainable and productive state enterprises, all forms of foreign investment, various types of cooperatives, small privately owned farm holdings and land lease arrangements, as well as self-employment and other forms of employment that can undoubtedly achieve greater efficiency and productivity in work.

In these difficult conditions, it has been shown that the best solutions are found only with the active and democratic participation of all the social partners.

We would like to stress the key role of the ILO in technical cooperation and training for all its constituents, in strengthening the capacity of ACT/EMP in all its offices to enable it to respond to the real needs and priorities of all employers, including those of Cuba, and allocating the necessary resources and maintaining the ILO's status as a work leader in knowledge about the world of work.

We view very positively the progress made in the process of reforming the ILO's methods of work and supervisory machinery, and in the search for greater transparency, credibility and responsibility for this Organization. Nonetheless we feel that the package of reforms undertaken is insufficient, and we need to focus our tripartite efforts on continuing to develop a process of continual improvement in the years to come.

We think it is absolutely essential for us to make use of the ILO's standard-setting advantages, its long history and its lofty values, which inspire all the constituents to create the path that leads to prosperity, solidarity and world peace.

Mr VILLAVIZA (*Worker, Philippines*)

On behalf of unions, workers and their families in the Philippines, let me express our complete support for the call of the ILO and the Director-General's vision of sustainable development for social justice. Certainly "the world needs a new era of social justice inspired by a vision of sustainable development".

The current global situation is not sustainable – where profit is given more value than people, where countless families continue to slide into poverty, where pay inequality persists, where wage policies fail as instruments for the redistribution of wealth, where contractual work now dominates employment, where young people suffer double the average unemployment rate, where the transformation of informal to formal employment is slow, where union membership and coverage of collective agreements keep declining, where workers are sidelined in social dialogue and decision-making mechanisms, where social protection continues to deteriorate, where affluent countries and their governments and international institutions continue to impose restrictive conditions on development assistance and loans for developing countries, and where the social dimension of regional integration, bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and other forms of partnerships are non-existent, inadequate or not fully implemented.

Trade unions share in the ILO's battle for decent work where men, women and the youth have productive and remunerative employment in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Our partners – employers and government – should go beyond pledges for decent work and rate themselves on the basis of actual accomplishments.

We join the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference with great hopes.

We express our full concurrence with the adoption of the proposed instruments on decent work for domestic workers. We can make a difference to the work and life of those who provide crucial household and care services to make all other work possible. Collectively, let us improve their conditions by voting for the ILO Convention and Recommendation on decent work for domestic workers and end their long history of exclusion.

The TUCP and other Philippine trade unions share a very special concern for domestic workers in our country and overseas. We will continue our efforts to ensure that domestic workers are provided adequate protection in law and in practice.

Saddled with many difficulties, including rapid technological changes and fund constraints, labour administrations continue to face many challenges. However, with tripartism we are making modest achievements in the Philippines.

Workers' participation in labour standards or policy-making, as well as implementation and enforcement, is improving.

Recently the Philippines' tripartite partners adopted the Labour and Employment Agenda – our roadmap to promoting decent work within the 2010–16 time frame.

With the DOLE leadership and with agreement among tripartite constituents, we have established a tripartite monitoring body that looks at complaints and violations of trade union and other human rights.

We have set up tripartite efficiency and integrity boards within the Department of Labour and Employment and attached agencies to ensure better implementation of standards and more rapid and more active responses to labour concerns. We have also agreed to a single-entry approach to ensure quicker labour dispute resolution.

Unions can do so much to bring about better results in labour inspection and in labour administration. Unions should be assisted in capacity building for appropriate knowledge and skills and should be provided with an enabling environment to participate in inspection. With few labour inspectors union participation is the better way.

Inadequate social protection plagues workers in many countries, including the Philippines. Efforts being undertaken to provide better security for workers must be doubled. We expect progress on the union-proposed programme on unemployment security in the Philippines. We also need improved programmes on workplace prevention and control of the silent but growing incidence of HIV infection, on maternity protection and on reproductive health, among others.

However, we firmly believe that unions, job security and decent wages remain the best social protection that workers and their families can have.

We need better answers to the scourge of contractualization in my country and the rest of the world. Contractual employment and subcontracting have been used to subvert trade union rights and undermine collective bargaining agreements. Such practices threaten unions and will reverse gains from our years and years of struggle for workers.

Let us have a new model for growth, one that is inclusive, equitable and fair. Eight years into the ILO's centenary and four years into the conclusion of the Asian Decent Work Decade, let us together practice the value espoused by the ILO which we all stand for: lasting peace based on social justice.

Original Arabic: Mr AHMED ABD ELAZIZ GHANDOUR
(*Worker, Sudan*)

This 100th Session of the International Labour Conference should mark a new beginning for this Organization, a time when we take stock of the achievements of previous sessions and what has been accomplished. However, we should also take a hard look at the failures and shortcomings of this Organization. We must pause and ask ourselves whether we have really done everything we can for the good of workers so that they live in dignity. What have we achieved with respect to dialogue between the social partners to help enhance productivity and create an adequate working environment conducive to harmonious relations? Have we moved towards a guaranteed income to provide decent working conditions for workers, who constitute the driving force behind development and progress?

A new era for social justice is the very pertinent title of the Director-General's Report this year. Social justice remains the objective of this Organization – but until now, it has been out of reach.

The negative repercussions of unfair economic globalization are still weighing heavily on world, regional and national social and economic systems.

Globalization policies are making the rich richer and the poor even poorer. And the world seems to carry on and pay no attention to this situation, as if it had failed to notice the food crisis. It is as if we had not learned any lessons from the economic crisis through which we have just passed, leaving devastation and suffering in its wake; and these adverse effects are still so visible.

We cannot achieve social justice, overcome the effects of the crisis and enjoy food and social security or prosperity unless the international community realizes what is happening and makes a contribution – and that starts here in the ILO. We need to get back on track, to apply the principle of equality, to support production, to make sure that the efforts of workers are duly rewarded and to ensure that there is social justice between peoples and nations. We must put an end to discrimination and double standards.

We need to focus on the Director-General's Report concerning the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. We are following the events going on, which are far worse than those described. The Report appeals to all honest women and men in the world, to all workers, employers and governments, to lend support to the Palestinian workers and people, so that their territories are liberated and a Palestinian State, with Al-Quds as its capital, is created and recognized in the very near future; and to lend support to the liberation of all the occupied territories in Golan, in the Shebaa farms and in South Lebanon.

The 15th General Conference of the Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation was held recently, and all officials were elected in a democratic and transparent way – from the grass roots to the highest positions; this is the proof of the progress we have achieved in Sudan's union movement, especially with respect to the rights of women and young people. Women now occupy more than 25 per cent of the posts, a percentage established as the minimum threshold in trade union statutes.

Early this year, a referendum took place on Southern Sudan, in accordance with the peace agreement signed in 2005. Although the result was contrary to the wishes of the trade union movement, we respect the choice of the inhabitants in the South.

The Arab region has seen unprecedented movements led by our young people aspiring to a better life and trade unionists striving for a decent life. Our fear, however, is that unless this Organization ensures that its principles and values are properly implemented, there will be a veritable revolution in the corridors of the Organization.

We hope that this Conference bodes well for the future of our workers, and that the Organization will consolidate its efforts to become fully productive and lead us towards a world of real social justice and prosperity for all members of our societies.

Original Arabic: Mr AL-DARRAJI (Worker, Iraq)

On behalf of the workers of Iraq, I would like to wish this Conference every success so that we can adopt the resolutions and recommendations that are needed to provide for the workers' needs.

Iraq has lived through very difficult times of late, and what has been achieved in terms of security and stability, as well as in the economy, is remarkable. Our development plan for 2010–14 and the national strategy to combat poverty are important steps to-

wards establishing a national economy that is respectful of democratic practices and human rights. Steps like this are of particular importance given the difficult international environment in which the Arab world finds itself.

It is in this context that the trade union movement has been engaging in activities in the mixed private sector and the cooperative sector. It has thus become a social and occupational force of considerable influence in social, political and employment terms. Social dialogue, with full consultation, participation and representation in both technical committees and the Committee on Standards of the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, is moving forward in total freedom. We have met many challenges and for that we thank the Minister of Labour.

We are continuing to suffer from the policies of the previous regime, especially the 1987 Resolution No. 150 and Decree No. 8750, which greatly hinder our activities because of the difficult situation created by the occupation. Our federation has launched an appeal for elections in the private and cooperative sectors so that we can elect trade union representatives who understand the needs of the workers.

In this period of transition we count on the support of the ILO for this effort to make people aware of what trade union freedom, collective bargaining and tripartite dialogue are all about. The path to free elections is democracy and through transparency.

We would like to thank the international confederations and the Arab trade union movements which support our Arab federation and our workers' organizations.

At this 100th Session of the International Labour Conference our federation has done much to pave the way for the necessary legislation in our country.

In conclusion, I would like to voice our support for the effort of the Palestinian people to build their new State, and I call upon the Government of Bahrain to respect the work of its trade unions.

Ms JONG (Employer, Kiribati)

On behalf of the Kiribati Major Employers' Organization, I am honoured and, indeed, privileged to have this opportunity to address this historic 100th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Kiribati became a Member of the ILO in the year 2000. Since then, we have continued to work in close collaboration with the ILO, through the cooperation of the employers and workers, as we endeavour to implement the policies of the ILO in order to fulfil our national objective of resolving all labour and employment issues. In order to address these issues and to ensure global economic justice and peace, we understand that the ILO needs to ensure that its objectives are met through decent work for domestic workers, social security and protection and fair treatment.

With its population of just over 100,000, Kiribati continues to face problems regarding a lack of employment in the country, which is linked to social problems arising from poverty among its people, some of whom are unable to meet their daily needs. The lack of adequate social security and decent work is one of the greatest challenges facing the country. As a major employer myself, and having experienced the problems of our people, I would like to stress that ILO policies should focus more on the creation of employment opportunities. The ILO should work together with our Government to resolve this issue first of all, and then address other

objectives which are also of importance, such as decent work for domestic workers, social protection and security.

To stress how serious the problem of employment is in our country, every day an increasing number of people knock on employers' doors, desperately looking for any jobs available. We believe that this is a major problem that takes away people's freedom and dignity, denying them peace of mind, and, consequently, increasing social problems.

I am grateful to say that employers in the private sector in Kiribati have contributed greatly to employment in our country and have continued to try to expand their businesses in order to create more jobs for our people. At the same time, however, employers have also faced financial crisis as a result of increasing charges, introduced not only by the Government but also by our local governments or councils. Employers feel that some of these charges are unnecessary and hamper growth. We know that

there cannot be sustainable jobs without sustainable businesses and also there is no guarantee of job creation if enterprises are failing because of the financial crisis. At this stage, I would like to take this opportunity to request the ILO to focus on this problem, as we all believe that economic growth leads to the growth of employment. I believe that the ILO can make this change, if it works together with our Government and all its member States around the world, especially those developing countries who face problems similar to those affecting my country.

I believe that, if we work together hand-in-hand, in close cooperation with all our social and development partners, we will overcome our social problems, and will give love and hope to all human beings who need help, and support. Thus, the dream of the ILO of a better and peaceful world for all will be fulfilled.

(The Conference adjourned at 1 p.m.)

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