CORRIGENDA

Corrigendum to the exchange of letters between the Commission of the European Communities and the International Labour Organization

(Official Journal of the European Communities C 156 of 30 May 2001)

(2001/C 165/12)

On page 5, the text should read as follows:

'Exchange of letters between the Commission of the European Communities and the International Labour Organization

Letter from the European Commission of 14 May 2001

Dear Mr Director-General,

The International Labour Organization and the European Communities have a shared commitment to social and economic progress, to improving living and working conditions, and to promoting employment. Since the first agreement between the ILO and the Communities in 1958, the two organizations have progressively developed their cooperation to further these aims.

The ILO and the European Communities, represented by the Commission, last exchanged letters in 1989. Since then, there have been profound changes in Europe while the global economy has been developing rapidly, and both the ILO and the European Communities have significantly reinforced and developed their capacity for responding to new challenges in the area of social and employment policy. It is therefore timely for us to bring our exchange of letters up to date. This new exchange of letters should thus serve, first, to identify the areas in which new challenges have emerged for both our organizations, and second, to establish on that basis the priority areas in which cooperation between the ILO and the Commission would be most beneficial.

Since 1989, social and employment issues have increasingly moved to the fore both at the European level and internationally. Globalization has undoubtedly brought many benefits but it is widely felt that these are reaching too few. There has been growing public concern that the social aspects of globalization have been neglected. It is also being recognized that new integrated approaches are called for at various levels, including by the institutions of the international community. The ILO has identified four strategic objectives as crucial to its mandate in the context of globalization: fundamental principles and rights at work, the promotion of employment for women and men, the enhancement of social protection and the promotion of social dialogue. Together, these constitute the essence of 'Decent Work'. The process of European integration, for its part, has acquired a strong and dynamic social dimension. In this context, the promotion of quality is now at the heart of the EU's agenda for employment, social policy and industrial relations, as the driving force for a thriving economy, more and better jobs and an inclusive society. Moreover, the process of enlargement of the European Union will require the new Member States to adhere to the framework of the European social model.

With regard to labour standards and human rights, an area in which the Community and the ILO share a strong common interest, the importance of promoting respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, alongside economic development and trade liberalization, is now more widely recognized than ever. In 1995, the World Summit for Social Development defined a social floor for the global economy in terms of the ILO Conventions covering four basic principles: freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour and discrimination, and the abolition of child labour. In this context, the ILO has reinforced its role as the focal point for international efforts to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work with the adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In the European Union, a reference to fundamental social rights is now included in the Treaty itself, as is the possibility of concrete action by the Community against discrimination and social exclusion. Furthermore, the European Union has proclaimed a Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will be another instrument in its efforts to promote economic and social progress. The Community is committed, moreover, to promoting core labour standards throughout its external relations policies and in its development cooperation.

With regard to the social dialogue, there have been significant developments in the EU since 1989. The social partners have been given new and enhanced responsibilities in the elaboration of social policy at the European level. This reinforces social dialogue at the EU level while pointing to a new way of moving ahead on social policy matters. These developments are particularly important in view of the forthcoming historic enlargement of the EU.

In respect of the promotion of employment, similarly, both the ILO and the European Community have significantly strengthened their efforts since the last exchange of letters. Indeed, creating greater employment opportunities for women and men has been declared one of the ILO's strategic objectives. The European Union, for its part, has developed an extensive employment strategy which seeks to maximize the employment potential of the European economy while respecting the principle of gender equality. It should further be noted that the ILO and the European Community now have common goals with respect to the promotion of social protection.

With regard to development cooperation, the challenges facing the ILO and the Communities have evolved considerably since the 1989 exchange of letters. It is a tribute not least to the advocacy of the ILO that the international system as a whole is increasingly integrating social considerations into programmes and strategies for economic development. This also serves to underscore the lasting importance of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and its follow-up.

On the EU side, the Community aims, through its development cooperation policy in which equity is a guiding principle, to foster sustainable development and to help developing countries to eradicate poverty and to become integrated into the world economy. Indeed, the Community recently agreed that poverty reduction should be the central objective of its development efforts. The ILO's Decent Work agenda is also a development agenda based on growth, employment and jobs. Development cooperation is one means of action which the ILO uses to promote and realize its values while simultaneously responding to the developmental needs of its member States.

Against this background, the Commission and the ILO agree that it would be of benefit to both organizations to develop their cooperation by focussing on the following priority areas:

— The promotion of labour standards, notably with regard to the principles and rights set out in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work;

— The promotion of employment, notably through an exchange of information and experience on the European Employment Strategy and the ILO's efforts to create employment opportunities for women and men;

— Social dialogue, not least with a view to the possible dissemination of the lessons from the European experience with social dialogue to other regions of the world;

— The social and employment policy aspects of enlargement of the EU, notably with regard to social dialogue;

— Social protection, through targeted collaboration on selected themes; and

— Development cooperation, notably with a view to strengthening the social dimension of development, while also collaborating at the operational level in the service of sustainable development.

In order to develop cooperation in these and in other areas of mutual interest, the Commission and the ILO confirm the usefulness of holding high-level meetings on an annual basis, alternately in Brussels and Geneva, which will review existing cooperation and plan joint activities for the following year.

The following provisions of the 1989 exchange of letters will continue to apply:

— The Community, represented by the Commission, will continue to be regularly invited to meetings of the ILO's International Labour Conference and of the Governing Body.

— The Commission will, in turn and as appropriate, invite representatives of the International Labour Office to meetings of the Commission at service level dealing with social and labour matters likely to be of interest to the International Labour Organization.

— The President of the Commission and the Director-General of the ILO, or their representatives, will hold consultations on developments within their respective organizations which are likely to have implications for cooperation between the two parties.

— The appropriate form for the exchange of information or assistance in areas of shared interest can be agreed upon on a case by case basis (visit, preparation of a document, working group, financing of projects) by the programme managers concerned.

To facilitate cooperation through project financing, the ILO and the Commission will continue to hold discussions with a view to establishing standard financial and administrative modalities for ILO implementation of Commission-funded projects.

There is no doubt that by sharing our experience, engaging in joint reflection on new approaches to contemporary social issues and, where appropriate, pooling our expertise, we can both respond even more effectively to the need to promote employment opportunities and to maintain and improve living and working conditions worldwide.

Yours faithfully,

Anna DIAMANTOPOLOU
Member of the Commission

Letter from the ILO of 14 May 2001

Dear Commissioner,

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your letter of 14 May 2001, the terms of which are as follows:

'The International Labour Organization and the European Communities have a shared commitment to social and economic progress, to improving living and working conditions, and to promoting employment. Since the first agreement between the ILO and the Communities in 1958, the two organizations have progressively developed their cooperation to further these aims.

The ILO and the European Communities, represented by the Commission, last exchanged letters in 1989. Since then, there have been profound changes in Europe while the global economy has been developing rapidly, and both the ILO and the European Communities have significantly reinforced and developed their capacity for responding to new challenges in the area of social and employment policy. It is therefore timely for us to bring our exchange of letters up to date. This new exchange of letters should thus serve, first, to identify the areas in which new challenges have emerged for both our organizations, and second, to establish on that basis the priority areas in which cooperation between the ILO and the Commission would be most beneficial.

Since 1989, social and employment issues have increasingly moved to the fore both at the European level and internationally. Globalization has undoubtedly brought many benefits but it is widely felt that these are reaching too few. There has been growing public concern that the social aspects of globalization have been neglected. It is also being recognized that new integrated approaches are called for at various levels, including by the institutions of the international community. The ILO has identified four strategic objectives as crucial to its mandate in the context of globalization: fundamental principles and rights at work, the promotion of employment for women and men, the enhancement of social protection and the promotion of social dialogue. Together, these constitute the essence of "Decent Work". The process of European integration, for its part, has acquired a strong and dynamic social dimension. In this context, the promotion of quality is now at the heart of the EU's agenda for employment, social policy and industrial relations, as the driving force for a thriving economy, more and better jobs and an inclusive society. Moreover, the process of enlargement of the European Union will require the new Member States to adhere to the framework of the European social model.

With regard to labour standards and human rights, an area in which the Community and the ILO share a strong common interest, the importance of promoting respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, alongside economic development and trade liberalization, is now more widely recognized than ever. In 1995, the World Summit for Social Development defined a social floor for the global economy in terms of the ILO Conventions covering four basic principles: freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour and discrimination, and the abolition of child labour. In this context, the ILO has reinforced its role as the focal point for international efforts to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work with the adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In the European Union, a reference to fundamental social rights is now included in the Treaty itself, as is the possibility of concrete action by the Community against discrimination and social exclusion. Furthermore, the European Union has proclaimed a Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will be another instrument in its efforts to promote economic and social progress. The Community is committed, moreover, to promoting core labour standards throughout its external relations policies and in its development cooperation.

With regard to the social dialogue, there have been significant developments in the EU since 1989. The social partners have been given new and enhanced responsibilities in the elaboration of social policy at the European level. This reinforces social dialogue at the EU level while pointing to a new way of moving ahead on social policy matters. These developments are particularly important in view of the forthcoming historic enlargement of the EU.

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There is no doubt that by sharing our experience, engaging in joint reflection on new approaches to contemporary social issues and, where appropriate, pooling our expertise, we can both respond even more effectively to the need to promote employment opportunities and to maintain and improve living and working conditions worldwide.'

I agree in full with the terms of this letter, since it is my belief that these arrangements will serve to ensure the continuation of the harmonious collaboration which has existed between our institutions as well as the reinforcement of that collaboration.

Yours faithfully,

Juan SOMAVIA
Director-General of the International Labour Office'.