



Reply by the Director-General to the discussion of his Reports

Introduction

1. Ninety years after its foundation, the ILO is again tested to prove its relevance in times of crisis. This 98th Session of the International Labour Conference was held in the context of a severe economic downturn that has morphed into a profound and global jobs crisis. The Governing Body decided in March 2009 that ways to tackle the crisis should be the central focus of the Conference agenda. In the span of six weeks the Office made the necessary arrangements to respond to this call.
2. Together we have delivered. I want to convey my deepest gratitude to all of you for the spirit in which our work was accomplished, culminating in the Global Jobs Pact, adopted unanimously on Friday, 19 June.
3. This year's very special Conference greatly benefited from the capable management of the President of the Conference, Mr Khandker Hossain, Minister of Labour and Employment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
4. We are equally indebted to the Vice-Presidents, Mr Allam, Employers' delegate of Egypt, Mr Zellhoefer, Workers' delegate of the United States, and Mr Palma Caicedo of Ecuador, Deputy Minister of Labour and Employment. Their skills have also contributed to the success of this Conference.
5. The work of the Chairpersons of our Conference committees and all the group and Government spokespersons who guided these complex debates to successful conclusions must be commended.
6. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Rapacki, for his most able stewardship of the Governing Body and, together with the Officers, for the preparation of this Conference.
7. A record number of women and men participated in this year's Conference: 4,931 members of delegations were accredited, of which nearly 29 per cent were women. Forty-two women were accredited to the Conference as Ministers, just over 27 per cent of the total number of participating Ministers. Women titular delegates for Workers and Employers were below 20 per cent. I wish to congratulate those countries that have increased their female representation at the Conference. At the same time we cannot relent on our objective to achieve at least one third, and eventually equal, female participation in the Conference.

90th anniversary celebrations

8. It was fitting that we brought home to the Conference the global celebrations of our 90th anniversary: over 200 events in 120 countries during one week in April 2009 and more still to come. The richness of the commemorative activities was recalled by the Regional Directors, and reflected in the film clippings and in the creative musical expression that emerged from the celebrations. The voice of the ILO was heard across all regions in an extraordinary tribute to our values and our responsibilities at this historic moment, telling the story of the ILO in a “Global Summit” at the local level.

The ILO Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis – Addresses by Heads of State and Government

9. The Summit was honoured to welcome an unprecedented number of Heads of State and Government. We were equally honoured to receive five Vice-Presidents who greatly enriched our discussions, as well as hearing a message from the UN Secretary-General.
10. President Lech Kaczyński of Poland stated that the crisis called for new approaches in economic and social policies based on “... a combination of approaches, bringing together several of the theories that have evolved in recent years, while maintaining the principle of a free market”. He saw a strong role for the ILO in defining these new approaches.
11. President Tarja Halonen declared that we must now promote a global, people-centred decent work recovery, while adding that “there are solutions to ... ensure sustainable development globally”. She underscored the need for advancing gender equality as “we cannot neglect one half of mankind”.
12. Poverty alleviation, development and social dialogue were the main messages brought by President Armando Guebuza of Mozambique. He emphasized the role of decentralization and of rural development in his country’s orientations and made a strong plea for social justice: “... all of us together can give this world a true dimension of social justice, without poverty, with more jobs and with the prosperity that comes from a just society”.
13. President Nicolas Sarkozy of France strongly argued that the world could not wait much longer for a better link between economic and social progress. He remarked that if we thought that this crisis was just a parenthesis and that we could go back to speculation and other forms of dumping, the people of the world would not accept it and we would risk social unrest. He called for urgent change and expressed his full support for the Global Jobs Pact and wished for it to be discussed with the ILO and the social partners in the preparations of the next G20.
14. President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé of Togo insisted that this crisis was not just an economic crisis but also a crisis of values and of vision. He pointed out that the Decent Work Agenda had all the components to ensure a sustainable recovery. He called for giving particular attention to youth, stating that massive youth unemployment was a social time bomb.
15. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil recalled how Brazil had built a national social protection floor composed of cash transfer benefits that mitigated the impact of the crisis, together with massive public infrastructure investments. He stressed solidarity as being the route to social development. President Lula also reminded us that a crisis was a delicate, but precious moment to enhance change in the world’s attitude towards strengthening the redistributive role of the State to promote social justice.

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16. President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina argued that to respond to the crisis, it was crucial to maintain the employment link and promote sustainable enterprises. The experience in Argentina underscored the role of tripartite agreements on work sharing, reduced working hours and skills development to protect jobs and pave the way for recovery. She stressed the role of the State in regulating the private sector and in infrastructure investments as key elements in responding to the crisis. She called for an ILO presence at the next G20 meeting.
 17. Prime Minister Bruce Golding of Jamaica emphasized the time-tested role of the ILO in promoting peace, social justice and human development. He argued that “we need to reconfigure the deliberative structure in whose hands the future direction of the world will rest. ... It is not enough for us to have to achieve emerging market status before we are invited to sit at the table.” He also insisted that while creating jobs was a social good, it was essentially an economic decision and if those jobs were going to be meaningful, they would require investment in workers’ training and enabling infrastructure.
 18. Prime Minister Tertius Zongo of Burkina Faso indicated that in order to strengthen workers’ rights in these times of crisis, his country had decided to ratify a number of ILO Conventions on employment policy, vocational training and occupational safety and health.
 19. In a video address to the Conference, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh called for an “employment-centred approach to development” in order to usher in a “just and fair world”. She stressed the rights and welfare of migrant workers and proposed to bring together sending and receiving countries around a common platform on migrant labour.
 20. These statements collectively represented a strong endorsement of the ILO’s approach to a people-centred and productive recovery.

The ILO Summit on the Global Jobs Crisis – Panel discussions

21. Four panels were held to discuss issues in relation to the jobs crisis. We are indebted to Charles Hodson (CNN) and Paranjoy Guha Thakurta (independent journalist from India) for the very professional way in which they moderated these panels.
22. Mr Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the WTO, indicated that notwithstanding close cooperation between the secretariats of the ILO and the WTO “the real cooperation and coherence had to be done by the member States”. Fully in line with the views I have been expressing, he insisted that trade protectionism was the wrong answer, while employment and social policies were the right answer. European Union Commissioner Vladimir Spidla recalled how the EU Growth and Jobs Strategy addressed youth unemployment through apprenticeships and training programmes. Professor Maria João Rodrigues shared her thoughts about adapting the EU Lisbon Strategy to the context of the crisis, while stating that the fundamental orientations remained valid.
23. Mr Kemal Dervis, Vice-President of the Brookings Institution, recalled that over the last 20 years, the rate of growth of employment relative to GDP has declined and that wages have been lagging as well. Mr Eckhard Deutscher, Chair of the OECD Development Aid Committee, stressed the importance of governments meeting their international commitments. Ms Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, called for a fundamental rethink of growth and development. Mr Yogendra Kr. Modi, Employers’ delegate of India and member of the ILO Governing Body, explained that this was a crisis *in* the financial system, not *of* the

system. Ms Sharan Burrow, President of the ITUC, called for a better balance between the market and the State, reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, and economic policies giving due recognition to minimum wages and social protection, as well as collective bargaining.

24. Six Vice-Presidents, Mr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Nigeria, Mr Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka of Kenya, Mr José Luis Guterres of Timor-Leste, Mr Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa, Mr Rafael Albuquerque de Castro of the Dominican Republic, and Mr Yves Sahunvuvu of Burundi, discussed the impact of the crisis in their countries and the measures their governments had taken both to cushion the effects on their people and to prepare for recovery. All pointed out that their countries were facing major difficulties before this crisis, which only added further hardship.
25. The Vice-President of Kenya captured the prevailing sentiment when he used the Swahili word *harambee*, or pulling together, as the best expression of what needed to be done by world leaders and social partners to address the consequences of the crisis and promote economic recovery.
26. Ms Hilda Solis, Secretary of Labor, United States, highlighted the role of education and skills and training to prepare for the workforce of the future. Mr Wiseman Nkuhlu, President of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), called for a more balanced approach, with the participation of business, labour and government jointly shaping responses to the crisis.
27. Mr Michael Sommer, President, Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), stated that solutions could only be found together based on common values and respect for workers' rights. Mr Carlos Tomada, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Argentina, pointed to the risks of growing informality and the importance of equipping young women and men with skills in demand on the labour market.
28. Ms Aisha Abdel Hadi, Minister of Manpower and Migration, Egypt, emphasized that G20 leaders should not lose sight of the social dimension of the financial and economic crisis. Mr Javier Lozano Alarcón, Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare, Mexico, described how previous crises had prepared his country to respond more effectively to this crisis.

Recovering from the crisis: A Global Jobs Pact

29. At the onset of this Conference, expectations were high. So was our responsibility. We do not want future generations to “express the view that they wasted their lives and their opportunities”, warned Mr Trotman, the Worker spokesperson. “This is a unique opportunity to respond to the crisis on the basis of a tripartite consensus and in real time, by sending out a message to the international community, from the point of view of governments, employers and workers, in other words from the real economy”, reminded Mr Funes de Rioja, the Employer spokesperson. “The Millennium Development Goals – the dream to end poverty in our lifetime – will remain unfulfilled if we fail”, alerted the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina.
30. Many of you came here to share how the crisis is affecting people and enterprises, with rising unemployment, bankruptcies, informality and poverty, putting families and communities, in developing and developed countries, under duress. But the general expectation emanating from this Conference was the need for action.

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31. In Ukraine, Ms Denisova, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, reported that the unemployment rate had tripled in one year. The Workers' delegate from Cape Verde, Mr Silva, told us how the crisis was destroying jobs in the tourism and construction sectors. Mr Ngadeesanguannam, Employers' delegate from Thailand, reported the increase in bankruptcies, especially in small and micro-enterprises, and problems in absorbing into the labour market a massive wave of returning migrant workers. Remittances are shrinking, as reported by Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria and the Philippines, among others. The Minister of Labour, Employment and Youth of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr Kapuya, said that his country's agriculture sector was suffering from a drop in the price of cotton, coffee and tea. The Employers' delegate of Iraq pointed out that the crisis was not only a problem of unemployment and informality, but also of security and peace.
32. Our mandate and core values received strong support from many high-level speakers. According to President Lula, "at a time when so many paradigms are disintegrating, the ILO represents a reserve, in political, ethical and moral terms". In this he is joined by Mr Støre, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway: "The ILO and the Decent Work Agenda are tailor-made to help protect the livelihoods of ordinary people from casino capital and misguided markets".
33. After three weeks of intense work in the innovative Committee of the Whole on Crisis Responses, chaired efficiently by Ambassador Rapacki from Poland, the Conference adopted a Global Jobs Pact. I fully share his assessment: "The main message I take from the Summit is one of strong endorsement of the approach we have developed", that is taking what we know is effective and applying it to the crisis.
34. Mr Funes de Rioja, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, echoed the views of many: "After we finish our work here, the spirit and contents of the Pact will need to be applied, taking into account national circumstances". Ms Burrow of the ITUC conveyed our high expectations when she stated: "The world must look different after the crisis, and our response, based on the Global Jobs Pact, must help ... build a fair globalization".
35. Many interventions contained explicit statements endorsing and supporting the Pact. This is well captured by the words of Ms Charalambous, Minister of Labour and Social Insurance of Cyprus: "A Global Jobs Pact definitely brings together the key policy options for boosting employment, broadening social protection and enhancing social security, when crafting national recovery policies ... it can provide viable options for national decision-making".
36. The Global Jobs Pact is a powerful message of this Organization, emanating from the actors of the real economy, exposed to the adverse effects of the crisis, but also capable of forging effective responses. The Pact is an agreement constructed on the basis of common principles and values, social dialogue, accumulated international expertise and concrete experience.
37. Our appreciation goes to the members of the drafting committee, in particular Ms Sharan Burrow of the ITUC and Mr Philip O'Reilly of the IOE.

Employment and social protection at the core of recovery

38. I could not agree more with Mr Trogen, Employers' delegate of Sweden, when he reminded us of the relevance of the 2007 International Labour Conference conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises. Many delegates shared with us the

measures taken to help enterprises overcome the contraction in credit flows and in demand, to safeguard viable jobs and innovate for new jobs. Mr Farrugia, Employers' delegate of Malta, pointed out that it was extremely important to strengthen the sustainability of Maltese enterprises, facilitate access to finance for SMEs, and provide intensive training and reskilling programmes for workers. Innovative policies combine active labour market policies and social security. In Finland Ms Poskiparta, State Secretary, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, reported that, together with the social partners, the country had developed a model called the "golden triangle" of flexicurity, "based on easy transitions between jobs and training, together with adequate social benefits, reintegration to work and improving the quality of working life". In Chile, linkages between social policies – health, employment, social security, housing and education – have been promoted to extend minimum social guarantees during the life cycle, explained Ms Meléndez, Government delegate.

39. As Mr Gomes, Minister for the Civil Service, Labour and State Modernization of Guinea Bissau, rightly pointed out, special attention has to be given to youth employment. Mr Suparno, Minister of Manpower and Transmigration of Indonesia, brought together the pillars of sustainable development when he identified the importance of pursuing the promotion of green jobs and the need to address eco-friendly jobs.
40. Several concerns were rightly raised by developing countries regarding the social impact of the crisis. Mr Pandey, Government delegate of Nepal, noted that the crisis had "brewed social recession and is likely to fuel instability, as a large segment of the unemployed and those who lose their jobs do not enjoy social protection".
41. Many speakers have recognized the role of social protection schemes as social stabilizers to mitigate the impact of the crisis and boost consumption and aggregate demand.
42. Mr Kharge, Minister of Labour and Employment of India, recalled the important measures taken to protect the most vulnerable, combining social protection, training and infrastructure investments. Mr Mavalizadeh, Deputy Minister for Parliament, Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, explained the new provisions to extend social security to farmers and rural workers. Ms Caracciolo, from the NGO network SOLIDAR, urged that "the ILO 'Global Social Floor' proposal ... should have a central place in the Global Jobs Pact. [It] is an affordable and rights-based mechanism for ensuring not only poverty alleviation, but also social inclusion and wealth distribution".
43. Mr Dinçer, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Turkey, echoed many when he stated: "As the crisis is of a global nature, a solution should be sought on a global scale to overcome it".

Protect and promote workers' rights and international labour standards

44. Many speakers expressed their concern that respect for workers' rights could be seriously undermined in this crisis. Ms Beaudin, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of Haiti, firmly hoped that the ILO would commit itself to reinforcing respect for international labour standards and workers' rights, as workers were the first victims of this crisis, while Mr Xu, Workers' delegate of China, stressed that protecting workers' rights and realizing decent work was ever more imperative in times of crisis. A strong call in favour of standards was made by Mr Veyrier, Workers' delegate of France, who insisted that it was time to give the ILO and its international labour standards system the central role in the shaping of the future economy. Mr Pedrina, Workers' delegate from Switzerland, echoed this call by stating that there were worrying signs that workers' rights would be

steamrolled by the current crisis, pointing out that “history teaches us that this would have catastrophic social consequences”.

45. Several countries have taken recent legislative measures to ensure full compliance with international labour standards. Mr Palma Caicedo, Deputy Minister for Labour and Employment of Ecuador, indicated that new legislation had endorsed fundamental rights at work, such as freedom of association and the eradication of forced and child labour. Ms Burrow, Workers’ delegate of Australia, recalled that in July 2009, the Fair Work Act would enter into force, placing collective bargaining at the centre of industrial relations in her country. Mr Lupi, Minister of Labour and Employment of Brazil, indicated that his President had just signed a decree giving national effect to Convention No. 182.

Social dialogue for collective bargaining and concerted action

46. I heard many delegates who emphasized the key role of the tripartite constituency, now more than ever. As expressed by Mr Gaillard, State Secretary of Switzerland, to find a sustainable solution a tripartite consensus is needed, based on responsible social dialogue. Mr Rusu, Workers’ delegate of Romania, further underlined the importance of social dialogue and tripartism at national level in reinforcing social cohesion and reflecting national priorities. Mr Lacasa Aso, Employers’ delegate of Spain, stressed the importance of social dialogue as a tool for economic recovery.
47. Delegates gave numerous examples of consultations and agreements that have taken place since the economic crisis started. Ms Butler-Turner, Minister of Labour of the Bahamas, indicated that following tripartite dialogue and consultations, a national skills training and retraining programme for recently laid-off workers would start as of September 2009 in her country. Mr Mdladlana, Minister of South Africa, reported that social dialogue was instrumental in preventing job losses and regaining productive capacity in the clothing, textiles and footwear, mining and auto sectors. Mr Khouja, Government delegate of Morocco, reported that tripartite dialogue was being implemented to identify measures and a technical committee had been set up to deal with the textile, leather and automobile sectors to cooperate with all production actors.
48. I fully agree with Mr Hetteš, Government delegate of Slovakia, when he urged us to guarantee minimum social standards and recognize the importance of social dialogue. His Government established the Council for Economic Crisis and signed a memorandum with the social partners. We were also informed of recent bipartite initiatives that have been taken. Ms Tchombi, Minister of Public Services and Labour of Chad, reported that her Government had established a mechanism for dialogue between the State and the private sector, FODEP. Ms Opechowska, Employers’ delegate of Poland, indicated that the “Polish employers’ confederations and the biggest trade unions initiated an autonomous dialogue in the fourth quarter of 2008 to find measures to alleviate the impact of the crisis on the economy and workers”.
49. As expressed by Mr Dumas, Minister of Labour, Small and Micro-Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago, “social dialogue remains the cornerstone of governance in our labour market” and also of the crisis as a whole.
50. The high number of initiatives and measures at the national level shared by delegates during the Conference are a testimony to the strength and value of tripartism in times of crisis. There is great potential to learn from each other.

World Day Against Child Labour and tenth anniversary of Convention No. 182

51. This year we marked the World Day Against Child Labour with a special sitting of the Conference and placed the spotlight on the 100 million girls still trapped in child labour worldwide. Ten years ago your Conference unanimously adopted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The speed of ratification of this Convention, with 169 ratifications to date (only 14 short of universal ratification), is unparalleled in the history of the ILO. This reflects a major political will to eradicate child labour, especially its worst forms. A concrete example of political will has been brought to us by Ms Sufian, State Minister of Labour and Employment of Bangladesh, when she announced that her Government was “moving ahead with formulating a comprehensive policy on the elimination of child labour”. We were honoured by the presence of United States Senator Tom Harkin, as well as of Mr Bokkie Botha and Sir Roy Trotman, the Employer and Worker spokespersons at the time of the adoption of Convention No. 182, and of Kailash Satyarthi, organizer of the Global March Against Child Labour. I will echo Senator Harkin’s words referring to the global recession when he said that “powerful global forces threaten to take us backwards and to drag a new generation of children into abusive and exploitative labour”. Indeed, this is a time when our values, solidarity and determination to work together to end the worst forms of child labour are being tested. I therefore plead with the international community to press for universal ratification of Convention No. 182.

Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour: The cost of coercion

52. Eleven years after the adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the third Global Report on the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour under the Declaration’s follow-up provisions gave rise to a stimulating and rich discussion. Mr Tabani, for the Employers’ group, pointed out that the real cost of forced labour was difficult to measure in financial terms since it was far more related to self-respect, human dignity and broken lives. Mr Trotman, for the Workers’ group, underlined the fact that while knowledge on forced labour was improving and awareness was increasing, negative trends still persisted in some countries.
53. Mr Illoh, Government delegate of Nigeria, noted with concern “the emergence of new forms of forced labour which require urgent attention and action” in partnership with the social partners and other stakeholders. Mr Hands, Government delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, observed that the progress in labour legislation had not been sufficient to eradicate this scourge, which was resurfacing in the form of modern practices. Mr Zwerenz, Government delegate of Austria, recalled that forced labour, and especially trafficking in human beings, was one of the downsides of globalization also affecting industrialized countries. Ms Robinson, Government delegate of Canada, emphasized that “it is imperative that we strengthen protection for workers that may be vulnerable to trafficking and forced labour”.
54. Ms Mugo, Employers’ delegate of Kenya, pointed out that “law-abiding employers in the formal economy ... have little or no linkage to either the victims or perpetrators of forced labour”, but their role was nevertheless to fight against the risk of forced labour. In this regard, Mr Pant, Employers’ delegate of India, argued that promoting effective regulation of migrant agencies in the countries concerned appeared to be a valid target for ILO assistance and support for its constituents.

Gender equality at the heart of decent work

55. I wish to thank Mr Arthur, Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality of Norway, for ably steering the Committee on Gender Equality. He presented a widely shared view when he stated: "During times of economic crisis, not respecting fundamental principles and rights at work would represent both a failure to uphold universally recognized rights and a failure of economic policy to ensure growth and recovery. This current crisis should be viewed as an opportunity to shape new gender equality policy responses."
56. Ms Perron, Employers' delegate of Canada, speaking on behalf of Ms María Fernanda Garza, Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, paid a strong tribute to the work of the Committee, stating that it had focused "on solutions, results and responses that are appropriate to the situation in each country and the dynamic development of the private sector, while attaching priority to sustainable results". Ms Barbara Byers, Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, made a strong link, stressed by several speakers, with the crisis by stating: "Our Committee's recommendations are consistent with the Global Jobs Pact emerging from the Committee of the Whole. While the crisis affects all workers, a gender lens is needed to address the specific impact on women." Indeed, the Committee of the Whole benefited from a presentation on the outcome of the work of this Committee.
57. I am grateful to all members of the Committee for providing us with clear strategies on future action to be taken by governments and social partners, with the support of the Office, to make further progress on the road to gender equality.

HIV/AIDS and the world of work

58. Under the strong leadership of Ms Nene-Shezi as Chairperson, the Committee on HIV/AIDS has delivered the results of a thorough first discussion on a new instrument. The Reporter of the Committee on HIV/AIDS, Ms Singh, indicated that the Committee's work was marked by enthusiastic and unanimous support for a strong international labour standard on HIV/AIDS, with proactive implementation and systematic follow-up. Mr Obath, Employer Vice-Chairperson, and Mr Sithole, Worker Vice-Chairperson, have both pointed to areas of strong agreement on the role of the world of work in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, while identifying areas requiring further discussion.
59. Many praised the ground-breaking role of the code of practice adopted in 2001, on which the Committee has built further. The Committee underlined the fact that prevention was an urgent priority and that the workplace could play a significant role in contributing to all the different forms of prevention, as it has the potential to reach the adult population with targeted interventions on a daily basis – and through them to reach their families and the rest of the community.
60. I wish to thank all the Committee members and its officers for their very hard work. The conclusions offer the prospect of a still difficult but extremely important discussion next year in order to finalize what has been started with such dedication here.

The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories

61. I have duly noted the deep concern expressed by many delegates regarding the difficult situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. Mr Al-Alawi, Minister of Labour of

Bahrain, spoke of the importance of the ILO's fact-finding role. He echoed many speakers who referred to the usefulness of the annual ILO mission and report as a means to continuously monitor and shed light on the situation. I am always encouraged to see that even in conflict situations solidarity between workers prevails and can build bridges. As reported by Mr Kara, Workers' delegate from Israel, mediation by the ITUC helped to reach an agreement between his trade union, Histadrut, and the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, as "Histadrut continues to offer legal guidance to Palestinian workers".

62. I have also taken note of the deep concern of the Employers' and Workers' groups regarding the situation of the occupied Arab territories, echoed by their spokespersons, calling on the ILO to support enterprises in respect of both policy and technical matters, and to prioritize training and education.

Application of standards

63. This year, the discussions in the Committee on the Application of Standards highlighted the wealth of the legacy built up over 90 years of ILO standard-setting activity.
64. The Conference Committee marked several anniversaries of international labour Conventions adopted over the years, starting with the 90th anniversary of the very first Convention adopted by the Conference in 1919: the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1). Among the anniversaries, of particular relevance are the 60th anniversary of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and of the Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95), and, as mentioned previously, the tenth anniversary of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
65. I am grateful to Mr Paixão Pardo, Chairperson of the Committee, for his able work. As he indicated, the Committee appropriately devoted a good part of its general discussion to the role of international labour standards within the context of the global economic crisis. Mr Horn, Reporter of the Committee, recalled that "the crisis must not be used as an excuse for lowering standards". I also welcome the Committee's suggestion to revisit these issues in greater depth next year.
66. I have carefully noted the many useful suggestions made by Mr Potter, Employer Vice-Chairperson, on the working methods of the Committee. I believe these require very careful examination and further discussion in the Governing Body. If the Committee is to continue its established tradition of "oversight through discussion", as put by Mr Horn, then working methods need careful examination. This is urgent in my view.
67. I also wish to underscore an observation made by Mr Cortebeeck, Worker Vice-Chairperson, pointing to the action taken by the ILO supervisory bodies and the technical assistance provided by the Organization to bring about genuine progress in "helping countries to make progress in building real social dialogue". This touches on the essence of the ILO and of its method of work. This is our purpose and our role, and when genuine results are achieved, we should feel proud.
68. The ILO's long-standing expertise and undeniable role were also clearly evident in the Committee's discussion of the General Survey carried out by the Committee of Experts on the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 155), and Recommendation (No. 164), 1981, and the Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention No. 155. The Committee recalled that the ILO Constitution provided for the protection of workers against sickness, disease and accidents at work as a fundamental element of social justice. There was also a common agreement that occupational safety and

health was of crucial importance in the present context of financial and economic crisis, as investment in workplace safety was a key factor in productivity and competitiveness.

69. The Committee also accomplished important work in the case of Myanmar and observance of Convention No. 29. It noted with serious concern the continued human rights violations in the country, and called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and that of other political prisoners and labour organizers.
70. The Committee brings together at the international level important actors of the real economy fully conversant with national social realities. Through its work, it has conveyed important messages to protect and promote workers' rights during the present trying times and has offered guidance to tackle the human dimension of the crisis through decent work.
71. The Committee has once again given testimony to its dedication to the values and authority of the ILO. We owe them our gratitude.
72. I take this opportunity to congratulate Brazil for the recent ratification of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and Timor-Leste, which deposited instruments of ratification for four core Conventions during the Conference (Nos 29, 87, 98 and 182).

Finance Committee – Approval of the programme and budget

73. When presenting my Programme and Budget proposals for 2010–11 to the Governing Body in March, I argued both for the need to strengthen the work of the Organization in times of crisis and for an efficient use of taxpayers' money. You adopted these proposals with overwhelming support and I wish to thank you profoundly for this show of trust in and support for our Organization. We are mindful that this brings a heavy responsibility.
74. In addition, many members of the Finance Committee of Government Representatives expressed their appreciation for the improved structure and presentation of the programme and budget proposals. They also noted the progress made on results-based management and called for continued refining of indicators and targets.

Conclusion

75. Every Conference is unique. But, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, this Conference, faced with a worldwide social recession, was particularly challenging. This Organization responded. It adopted a Global Jobs Pact and received strong political support from Heads of State and Government, Vice-Presidents, Ministers of Labour, and heads of employers' and of workers' organizations.
76. This 98th Session of the International Labour Conference will no doubt be remembered as one when this Organization rose to the challenge of its time to demonstrate its capacity and relevance.
77. This Pact is a powerful message, a set of very practical measures, a guide to action for all of us. Building on your support, your trust, your dedication to the values and mandate of the Organization, we will now move forward to do our part in living up to the immediate task of giving life to our Global Jobs Pact.

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- 78.** It is an instrument for you to take back home and use as the basis for shaping national responses for recovery.
- 79.** The Pact is a global agenda that calls for the support of the G20, the United Nations and other international forums. We welcomed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's assurance of his support for taking forward the Pact in his message at the close of the Conference.
- 80.** I take note that the Conference has given the Office the mandate to assist its constituents in implementing the Global Jobs Pact. We are committed to doing just that, in cooperation with other multilateral agencies.