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REPORT ON THE 297th SESSION OF THE ILO GOVERNING BODY

The Governing Body still has a lot to improve. Some 84 papers comprised the agendas of the various committees at this session. Whilst their length has decreased, the sheer volume still remains a major challenge to digest and comment upon within a timetable that still restricts the ability of Governing Body members to debate substantial issues properly.

Further attention will be given in the near future to both the size of committee agendas as well as the purpose of papers proposed for discussion. Increasingly, the documents provided are for information purposes only, which again calls into question the relevance of such texts as well as the governance role of the Governing Body. The Group needs to be vigilant in ensuring that the focus remains on the governance role of the meeting and avoid the session merely becoming a processing of paper. Governing Body reform remains a key means to address these concerns.

Much of the focus of the session was on solving the problems that arose at the Conference by the Resolution on Asbestos and the Recommendation on Employment Relationship as well as on the first discussion of the Programme and Budget for the period 2008-09. Whilst another opportunity, including the discussion on the size of the budget, will occur next March, this was the first occasion for the Employers' Group to identify its programme priorities. In this respect, efforts continue to give a tighter focus to the world of work within the Office. Limited resources and increasing demands for big money items on issues such as information technology and the repair of Headquarters in Geneva means that technical co-operation and capacity within the Office remain under threat. Limited resources need to be well targeted for maximum impact (see full report).

Decent Work Country Programmes are now very much seen by the Office as the way forward for ILO technical co-operation at country level, even if a number of concerns have been expressed by the Employers on their implementation. Co-ordination of delivery of constituent needs is a useful tool to focus work and target resources. However, such initiatives must also fit in with wider UN development assistance initiatives to ensure the proper integration of ILO action within the wider national developmental frameworks. The Employers' Group believes strongly that such integration and the proper governance of these programmes is essential. If they appear, or are, parallel initiatives, then the real risk exists that donors will not support them.

Further work on Labour Conference and Governing Body reform remain very much on the agenda of the Employers' Group and of a number of Governments. During this session, agreement was reached, on a trial basis, to introduce some changes to the Conference in 2007 that will look to focus the political aspects of the Conference in the third week (see full report). Movement on improvements is slow due to the need to find consensus on the

concerns of all groups, but change will occur and the Working Party on reform will continue so as to maintain momentum.

GOVERNING BODY

AGENDA OF THE 2009 INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (ILC)

This was a first discussion on the agenda for the 2009 ILC; the final decision will be taken next March. Among items proposed by the Office, three received broad support: (a) employment and social protection in the new demographic context (general discussion based on an integrated approach); (b) HIV/AIDS and the world of work (standard-setting); (c) gender equality at the heart of decent work (general discussion). With regard to (b), the Employers' Group and a number of Governments proposed to hold instead a general discussion on the topic. All other proposals led to different opinions (and opposition) among Governing Body members. The Office will propose a short list in March with a view of redraft proposals in order to take into account all comments.

MYANMAR

In June 2006, the issue of Myanmar was again placed on the agenda of the Governing Body in order for it - in light of developments that may have occurred since the matter was last addressed at the June ILC - to decide on the most appropriate action.

Whilst some steps had occurred, all groups expressed frustration that the Government had not been able to agree on a mechanism to deal with complaints of forced labour within the framework set out by the International Labour Conference and raised serious questions as to whether any such commitment existed. In conclusion, the Governing Body:

- once again urged Myanmar to reach agreement on a complaints mechanism on the basis of the compromise text proposed by the ILO;
- restated that notwithstanding the moratorium on a prosecution of complainants of forced labour, any move to prosecute would be a violation of Convention No.29;
- decided to place a specific item on the March 2007 Governing Body agenda so as to enable it to move on a legal option including, as appropriate, involving the International Court of Justice.

THE ILO AND THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION

This issue came before the Governing Body in the context of an approach by ISO to explore collaboration with the ILO on occupational safety and health, in particular the ILO's OSH Management System Guidelines. The issue of ISO standards in the area of labour and social policy items is new and, drawing from the experience of constituents in the current ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility, requires a substantive discussion on whether or not the ILO should engage with ISO in areas which until now have been solely within the mandate of the ILO. In March 2007 such a debate will occur in the Governing Body and, until then, the ILO will not engage with ISO on safety and health

BELARUS

This case arose at the June 2003 International Labour Conference when a complaint was submitted by the workers. This led to the approval of a Commission of Inquiry by the Governing Body in November 2003. The recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry were handed down at the November 2004 Governing Body with a deadline of June 2005 for implementation of a number of its recommendations. The matter was examined by the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) in November 2005 and March 2006, as well as by the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) in June 2006. The CAS recommended that the November 2006 Governing Body assess whether “real and tangible progress could be noted” and “if no such progress could be noted, the Committee trusted that the Governing Body would begin to consider, at that time, whether further measures under the ILO Constitution could be considered.”

Since the CAS recommendations of June 2006, an informal meeting was held between the Secretariats of the Workers’ and Employers’ Groups, the Office, as well as a high level government delegation from Belarus. The Belarusian delegation detailed the progress it felt had been made in giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. The tripartite members present at the meeting express their appreciation for the new information presented by Belarus but stated that it would have to be processed by the ILO’s supervisory machinery.

At this session the Governing Body, the Office provided an oral report of the informal meeting. The Government took the floor to repeat the progress that it alleged to have made in giving effect to the Commission of Inquiry recommendations. The workers and employers took note of the progress detailed by the Belarusian government and encouraged it to continue to engage with the ILO supervisory machinery. The Governing Body requested that the Office prepare a paper that addresses all of the current developments in order to allow the Governing Body to examine the matter at its next session.

ASBESTOS

One of the items on the agenda of the Governing Body was the “Follow-up to resolutions adopted by the 95th Session (2006) of the International Labour Conference and other matters arising from the Resolution concerning Asbestos”.

By way of background, the Resolution on Asbestos was adopted as an Annex to the Conference Report of the Occupational Safety and Health debate at the June 2006 ILC. The Employers’ Group had voted against its adoption at the 2006 ILC on the basis that adequate notice had not been provided to understand the contents and impact of the Resolution. This led the employer Vice-Chairman, Daniel Funes, at the June 2006 session of the Governing Body, to request that a paper be prepared for discussion at the November 2006 session of the LILS Committee. Because the paper did not answer the request of the employers, another paper will be prepared for discussion at the March 2007 session of the GB. (Please refer to the LILS Committee report for information on this discussion).

Given their concerns regarding the manner in which the Asbestos Resolution was adopted and its status relative to other ILO instruments that make reference to asbestos, the employers could not support the Office’s efforts to promote the Resolution without adequate qualification of its status relative to other instruments. As such, it insisted that language be added to the point for decision to draw attention to the relative importance of Conventions

versus resolutions. As a result of the employers' amendment, member States will be requested to "take appropriate action to give effect to the Resolution on Asbestos taking into account that ratification of Conventions, including Convention No. 162 (Asbestos) and Convention No. 139 (Occupational Cancer) gives rise to treaty obligations." This is intended to draw attention to the fact that the terms of ratified Conventions prevail over Resolutions.

COMMITTEES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

ILC REFORM

Since its establishment in November 2005 the tripartite Working Group on Conference Reform has met four times. As a result of this work a proposal was adopted that will see some changes introduced on a trial basis for the 2007 Conference. Whilst not revolutionary, the proposals are noteworthy for the fact that any agreement on reform was reached at all. In order to try and build on this, the Working Party will continue its work until at least November 2007.

The 2007 Conference changes will primarily focus on improving efficiency in the work of the various technical and standing committees. The focus on technical matters will occupy the first two weeks of the Conference, with the political part of the Conference being focused on the third week.

The Office will finalize its planning around these suggestions, but members should note that the Employers' Group committee meetings will be on Tuesday 29 May, with the technical committees commencing their tripartite work on the 30th.

WORKING PARTY ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF GLOBALIZATION

Three papers were proposed for this session. A first on the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence, which produced its final report in early November; a second on the follow-up to the International Labour Conference discussion on changing patterns in the world of work; and a final one on the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Ministerial Declaration on generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, which was the theme of its high-level segment in July.

There was a direct link between the papers dealing with UN reform and ECOSOC, as both have direct implications for the ILO. The ECOSOC Declaration underlined a wider recognition within the UN system and international community of the ILO message *Decent and productive work for all*. In many respects this Declaration was a reinforcement of the ILO agenda rather than any new departure in terms of work. The Office will come back with a more substantial paper for the PFAC in March on the implications of this Declaration for its work, along with clarification on some of the specific elements such as the development of a decent work tool and the request to develop 'time bound action plans' on the Millennium Development Goals.

The second item set the Report of a high-level panel on coherence within the UN system. Its recommendations deal with development, humanitarian assistance and the environment as well as governance funding and management. The key objective of this panel was to try and eliminate duplication in the UN system at all levels. At the field level the

Report recommends piloting ‘one country UN programmes’, effectively consolidating all UN activity into one programme.

The follow-through to this report will have potentially major ramifications for the ILO. In his introductory remarks, the Director-General emphasized that he saw the report and its recommendations as a huge opportunity for the ILO, but no doubt there are challenges as well. This discussion was only a preliminary debate and the Office will prepare a substantial document for the March Governing Body where a full discussion will take place. The IOE will likewise prepare a more in-depth analysis on the implications for employers.

The final document dealt with the follow-up to the Director-General’s Report to the Conference last June – ‘changing patterns of work’. This report deals with not only all the issues the ILO covers, but also ones it does not. The Employers suggested that the most immediate areas of follow-up should cover those of the changing nature of the workplace (i.e. the impact on the actual workplace) and that the appropriate technical committees of the Governing Body should deal with specific topics on a case by case basis.

In introducing this report, the Director-General suggested a wide range of future topics for discussion by the Working Party, as did the Workers’ Group. This raised the question of what the function of the WP is and why do we have it.

For example, the agenda for this session was in itself instructive in that the papers presented for debate seemed like an assorted mixture without any real focus. This suggested to the Employers’ Group and some governments that a discussion on the future of the Working Party would be timely. Indeed, the original mandate of the Working Party was flexible and it was not envisaged to have a session every Governing Body.

The employers welcomed an opportunity to discuss the Working Party’s continued agenda and suggested that one *directly relevant* area for the Working Party would be regular updates on the Office’s Policy Coherence Initiative. The March session should bring some clarification on the next steps for this forum.

COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

There were 30 complaints and one question of receivability before the CFA.

Among the most notable cases were **Case No. 2449 (Argentina)** and **Case No. 2472 (Indonesia)**, where the employers successfully argued that the rights of trade unions to defend their trade union rights had to be balanced against their obligation to respect national laws. A specific reference to this was included.

Case No. 2405 (Canada) addressed legislative changes affecting public education. The employers raised concerns about the autonomy of the Government to govern on matters of public policy, even where these overlap with areas covered by collective agreements. In this regard the employers were successful in introducing wording suggesting rather than demanding the Government to conduct tripartite consultations.

Case No. 1787 (Colombia) was again discussed at this session. This is a very old and tragic case which pertains to, inter alia, the murders of trade union members. A tripartite agreement was signed at the 2006 International Labour Conference to address the ongoing situation of violence against trade union members. The employers expressed their concerns

regarding the ongoing problems, but successfully argued that a paragraph be added to commend the Government for the steps it has taken since the tripartite agreement was signed, as well as its extensive efforts to report developments to the Committee. In this regard, representatives of the Colombian Government gave a verbal report on the situation in Colombia to the members of the CFA at a special Saturday session.

The most contentious case this session was **Case No. 2265 (Switzerland)**, which addressed the absence of the reinstatement remedy for dismissed trade union members under Swiss law. The employers unsuccessfully argued for it to be postponed to ensure that the CFA would have all the elements before it and to allow more time for national processes to take their course. The workers argued for stronger language to be used in the recommendations and were strongly supported by the Governments. After a lengthy debate, compromise wording was agreed upon whereby the Government is requested to attempt to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

The CFA's rigid application of its principles has been a source of ongoing frustration for employers. A first informal meeting to address this issue, as well as concerns regarding the Committee's procedure, took place on Saturday 5 November. Participants of the meeting from both the employers and workers expressed their views and concerns regarding the CFA. The parties recognized the informal and preliminary nature of the discussions. However, they also recognized the need to agree on a way forward, as well as the importance of ensuring the future engagement of both the Office and the governments in the process. There was agreement that meetings to continue the process would take place in March 2007.

COMMITTEE ON LEGAL ISSUES AND INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS

The LILS Committee was advised that the "Quick Guide" of the Manual for drafting ILO instruments would be available for general distribution at the 2007 International Labour Conference. The Committee was also provided with an update of the Office's attempts to secure the 30 ratifications needed to adopt the 1997 Amendment to the ILO Constitution which would facilitate the abrogation of outdated Conventions. The target for achieving the required number of ratifications is the end of 2007 and the Office advised that it was taking a number of steps to secure these ratifications by the target date. On this point, the employers reminded the Office that it should also, where relevant, advise member States of the possibility of denouncing Conventions earmarked for abrogation.

The most contentious issue addressed by the Committee was the follow-up to be given to the Resolution on Asbestos that was adopted as an Annex to the Conference Report of the Occupational Safety and Health debate at the June 2006 ILC. The Employers' Group was against its adoption at the 2006 ILC on the basis that adequate notice had not been provided to understand the contents and impact of the Resolution. As such, the Employers' Vice-Chairman, Daniel Funes, at the June 2006 session of the Governing Body, requested that a paper be prepared for discussion at the November 2006 session of the LILS Committee.

The employers argued that the paper before the LILS Committee did not meet the employers' request. Though it addressed the main features of Resolutions, it did not address the procedural gaps that led to the last-minute adoption of the Asbestos Resolution, nor did it address its status relative to other ILO instruments that refer to asbestos. The employers therefore requested that another paper be prepared for the March 2007 session of the LILS Committee to address both of these issues.

Following the discussion of all agenda items of the LILS Committee, the Committee as a whole was transformed into an informal consultation. The March 2006 session of the Committee had instructed the Office to hold informal consultations to seek input into a paper to address improvements to the ILO's supervisory machinery, which it could not do for legitimate reasons. The employers provided detailed input regarding all aspects of the supervisory machinery, including: the need to maintain the impact and relevance, the need to allow for thorough consultation and preparation in future standard-setting; and the need to ensure that the Committee of Experts respects its mandate.

The foregoing paper will be discussed at the March 2007 session of the LILS Committee.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES

Five agenda items were before the subcommittee, all of them following on from previous Governing Body sessions and all of them continue the emphasis being given to the role of the constituents in shaping the work programme of the Multinationals Department and following implementation.

The first item related to an **update on the strategic priorities** for the Department. This laid out, in table form, the priorities, the output expected and the current work status of the work programme agreed by the Committee. It will be a regular paper going forward, as all recognized the need to ensure focus but also the possible need to realign priorities if events require.

In asking for the table to avoid too much simplification, the Employers also asked that MULTI, along with ACT/EMP and ACTRAV and the Officers of the Committee, prepare a paper for March 2007 on a new programme item that would explore the modalities on advising companies on the realization of international labour standards, develop training materials on labour standards, develop tools and partnerships to help strengthen national labour inspection and undertake research on the impact and value of private workplace monitoring and assessment methodologies. Like all the development of work within the committee, this will be done by consensus.

The second item related to an **update on CSR-related activities within the ILO**. This reflects the earlier decision that MULTI needed to be the co-ordinator of CSR within the ILO and in order to do that needed to know what other ILO departments were doing. The paper is still developing as it relies on others in the ILO giving MULTI information, something that is not as simple as it sounds. A further call was made to other departments to co-operate in the production of this information.

The third item was on **CSR issues outside of the ILO**. Calls were made to ensure the ILO was involved in the Global Compact Board and that the ILO undertake a survey of constituents on their involvement in local Global Compact networks and what they were doing with regard to the labour principles. Concern was also raised that more work seemed to be done with the Global Compact than with the MNE Declaration and this imbalance needed to be addressed. The Employers' Group also asked to be more closely associated with the ILO's work with the International Finance Corporation.

The fourth item concerned what to do with the **survey of the MNE Declaration**. Problems have persisted as to the uptake of the survey and its cost. A number of new proposals were tabled - none of which received categorical support - and the matter will be

raised again in November 2007 after a working group has had an opportunity to consider the issue in more detail.

Finally, the item on the **30th Anniversary of the MNE Declaration** was raised. Here it was agreed that an event will be held in Brussels to visibly promote the Declaration, but that further work was needed in scoping the event. The Officers will meet with the Secretariat in January 2007 to finalize these details as well as to examine a programme during the year to promote the Declaration, with a paper in March outlining the agreed strategy.

PROGRAMME, FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

The Governing Body had the opportunity to hold a first discussion on the Programme and Budget for 2008-09 based on a short paper prepared by the Office. The Governing Body also had a reflexion on the result-based management at the ILO.

On the draft **proposals for the Programme and Budget**, the Employers' Group repeated its priorities at the ILO, which concern mainly employment creation and enterprise development and the strengthening of employers' organizations and their participation in other programmes.. The Group also urged the Office to focus its activities on its mandate and to decide, if necessary, to remove some programmes if they do not respond to constituents' needs. Also underlined was the role of ACT/EMP. Not only does it provide technical cooperation, but it is also the guarantor of tripartism inside the ILO. In addressing the realities of a limited budget, the ILO has to find the right balance between decentralization to the field and the maintenance of expertise in Geneva. The Office has to respond to constituents in the field and, at the same time, not lose its expertise on global issues. Similarly, the ILO should address financial demands such as the building renovation (see below) and new oversight mechanisms within the current budget level.

Results-based Management (RBM) strategy, here the Group did not feel that this strategy was complete, especially with regard to the programming cycle and the regions review. New ILO programming and new mechanisms will appear in 2008 when the Governing Body will have to discuss the new Strategy Policy Framework paper.

Another issue was Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP). Both the Employers' and Workers' Groups urged the ILO to better involve the social partners in the design and implementation of activities as there was a feeling that the ILO imposes solutions rather than assisting constituents in reflecting their needs,. However, the Employers' Group in general supports DWCPs since they can help bring effectiveness and transparency to the ILO's national assistance.

Last year a new evaluation strategy was adopted, composed of thematic evaluations, country evaluations and an annual evaluation. Three papers were presented. The first related to the 2005 annual evaluation. Whilst in general supportive of the document, the Employers urged the ILO to train evaluators on tripartism and the role of constituents. The two other papers evaluated the ILO strategy for employment-intensive investment and the ILO activities in the Philippines. The Group indicated that other committees such as ESP and TC might be better forums to discuss these evaluations.

Among other discussions, the Building Subcommittee was the most important due to the consequences for the ILO finances. According to a study made by an independent consultant, the 30-year old ILO building in Geneva is in need of renovation. The study

evaluated the total cost at 120 million Swiss francs divided in three phases. The Committee agreed for the ILO to finance the first phase (7.7 million Swiss francs), but requested more information on funding possibilities for the two remaining phases.

COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The first item on the agenda received most of the attention from the Committee as it touched on the implementation status of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes. Employers expressed a number of concerns regarding the paper presented by the Office. As it was only two years since the start of Decent Work Country Programmes, the Office did not give an accurate picture of what was happening at county level. For example, only one DWCP had been completed in Latin America and the Caribbean. The same situation prevailed in the Arab States. The Employers' Group was concerned that the process had not been fully adopted by the constituents and more work in terms of awareness-raising was needed

The Employers' Group was also concerned that the ILO was not making much impact in its attempts to synchronize DWCPs with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). This is worrying at a time when donors are insisting on synchronization by UN agencies at country level in order to receive funding. The Group wondered whether the ILO had the leverage in terms of expertise and resources to overcome the many obstacles it faced when trying to influence the agendas of other UN agencies.

The Group also requested the Office to ensure that future progress reports on the implementation of DWCPs provide detailed information on how the social partners had been involved in the process. They also called for a clear governance and reporting structure for DWCPs. They were concerned that an evaluation report for the DWCP in the Philippines was submitted to the PFA Committee.

With regard to the resource mobilization paper, the Employers' Group was pleased that funding received for technical cooperation had reached an all time high. They also expressed satisfaction that the employment sector support had recovered and now accounted for 40% of funds received. More and more donors were now signing partnership agreements with the ILO which included funding for the social partners.

The Group looked forward to discussing guidelines on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the next session of the Governing Body. This was becoming an important source of funding in the UN system but was under-utilized in the ILO.

With regard to the item on the abolition of child labour, the Group approved the plan of action proposed by the Office but called for the strengthening of the role of the social partners in the fight against child labour. Though the Global Report published by the Office had mentioned the end of child labour being within reach, the Employers Group asked the ILO not to be complacent as information received from Africa for example showed that child labour was on the rise. Child labour could only be eliminated if the underlying causes – such as poverty and unavailability of basic education – were addressed.

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

The four review papers before the Committee at this session were: youth employment; labour inspectorates; an update of the Global Employment Agenda (GEA); and an overview of “past decisions of the Committee”. Additionally, a checklist of social protection policy areas was reviewed. The policy papers to be discussed were “Business environment, labour law, and micro- and small enterprises” and Collective Bargaining. However, an overly-ambitious agenda resulted in the Collective Bargaining paper being postponed until November next year.

The ‘overview of past decisions’ paper was revealing in that in the last four years approximately 70% of the 41 papers put before the Committee had no point for decision – a real issue of governance. This raised a number of questions such as: Did we need 41 papers? What have we achieved from them? How have they helped the Committee or the Office? These questions posed by the employers garnered some support from governments but the size of the agenda for March 2007 suggests that the workers, upon whose insistence there will be a further seven topics, are not as concerned.

The youth employment paper, which was supposed to be a programme review, was more reminiscent of a policy paper. Perhaps the most revealing part of this paper (and the Office presentation) was the ‘policy lessons learnt’ which included some highly contentious areas such as increased flexibility in labour codes having no impact on better youth employment outcomes. This was disappointing in that employers have as a matter of record in the 2005 Conference conclusions argued contrary arguments to some of these ‘lessons learnt’ only to see the Office now promote them as “ILO policy positions”.

The paper on labour inspectorates was much more focused on what the ILO could do in practical terms, such as sharing methodologies amongst countries; fostering networks; promoting awareness and so on. The final ‘review’ type document was the social protection checklist. This reasserted many areas of previous consensus but the presentation from the Office at least provided the Committee with some more tangible examples of the tools and work in progress.

Perhaps the most substantive item was the discussion on the “Business environment, labour law, and micro- and small enterprises” paper which tackled the very delicate subject of labour legislation reform. The discussion threatened to be overshadowed by the recent controversy on the World Bank’s “Doing Business Report” where its labour market indicators came in for some criticism from a number of U.S. senators, but time constraints limited interventions. Positively the Committee agreed for the Office to take up the World Bank’s offer to work with it on the labour elements of the Doing Business report. The Office will also continue its own work in this area.

COMMITTEE ON SECTORAL AND TECHNICAL MEETINGS AND RELATED ISSUES

Evaluation report of sectoral action programmes - Future orientation of the sectoral activities programme

The meeting welcomed the evaluation report on the action programmes which were launched in 2004-2005 and prolonged in 2006-2007. The Employers' Group recalled that

these action programmes had been prolonged because they had been the first ones of a new experiment and therefore required more time to be effective.

Employers recognized that the report generally showed positive results, especially in the textile and agriculture sectors, but insisted that action programmes should not continue after the normal duration of two years and should then become part of the everyday activities of ILO sectoral specialists. Their sustainability in the long run could be facilitated by the search for extra-budgetary resources. The Group also stressed that, if maintained, these action programmes should be more constituent-driven.

On the future orientation of the sectoral activities programme, the Employers' Group reiterated that these activities are both a window on the real world of work and an opportunity to engage in activities with actual employers and workers. Tripartite meetings offer excellent opportunities for discussion of relevant, technical and topical issues, and should therefore be maintained and encouraged. In this respect, employers urged consideration to be given to an improved budget allocation for the sectoral activities.

The meeting decided on the purpose, duration and composition of two sectoral meetings to be held in 2007 :

- **Tripartite meeting to examine the impact of global food chains on employment.** This meeting will be held for four days during the week beginning 24 September 2007. The social partners will be invited to nominate 18 representatives each and the purpose of the meeting will be to examine the impact of global food chains on employment, with emphasis on the need to strengthen social dialogue in order to achieve better policy coherence.
- **Meeting of Experts to examine instruments, knowledge, advocacy, technical cooperation and international collaboration as tools with a view to developing a policy framework for hazardous substances.** Twelve experts from each of the three groups will be invited to this four-day meeting to be held from 10 to 13 December 2007.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LABOUR STUDIES

Two items were on the agenda:

1. The Report of the Director. The Employers' Group supported the activities of the Institute identified in the Director's report. The employers nevertheless indicated that, because of financial constraints, there was a need to identify priorities. In this connection, the educational function of the Institute should receive priority and research should support the educational function of the Institute.

The Group also regretted the lack of activities addressed to employers or of direct interest for them. They invited the Institute to consider activities aimed at responding to employers' needs.

2. The Education Programme of the Institute. The Employers' Group spoke on the need to correct the imbalance in the participation of workers and employers in the internship

course organized each year prior to the International Labour Conference. The Director of the Institute replied that he was ready to discuss this issue with the social partners and to look with them for a solution.

As to the strengthening of the Education Programme, the paper submitted to the Board presented a list of options. The employers indicated that the Institute should give clarifications on the impact and cost of each of these options so that the Board would be in a position to make a choice and added that only by being able to compare cost and "benefits" would the Board be able to make the best use of the Institute's limited resources.

Employers supported collaboration with the Turin Centre, but not the duplication of efforts and work; they stressed that this collaboration should include the Employers' Programme of the Turin Centre.

OTHER MATTERS:

IPEC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The Employers' Group congratulated IPEC on the report and expressed its general satisfaction with IPEC's contribution to the elimination of child labour.

While IPEC's goal is to eliminate all forms of child labour, the Report noted that the direct interventions of IPEC seek to reach those children who are among the worst off. Moreover, the Global Plan of Action 2006-10 proposes that member States commit to the "elimination of all worst forms of child labour by 2016". This is an ambitious goal that employers fully support. However, in order to reach it, IPEC will need to actively involve the social partners.

Additional information was provided, detailing the breakdown of funds allocated to programmes between 2000-2005. This breakdown of funds showed, among other facts, that employers received less than half of what workers received and a tiny portion in relation to the budget allocated to NGOs. The latter have no accountability in the Organization and tripartism should remain the guiding principle in IPEC's work.

Until now, there has only been a limited amount of information provided about the role that the social partners have been playing in combating child labour and how IPEC was involved in supporting employers' organizations in their efforts to address child labour. This year, a thematic discussion on "The Role of employers' and workers' organizations in combating child labour" was included in the Agenda. Even though the examples of the involvement of employers' organizations were few and not detailed and the details of IPEC involvement in supporting their activities remained scarce, this thematic discussion was considered as an effort by IPEC to address the Group's concerns.

68TH SESSION OF THE BOARD OF THE TURIN CENTRE

This was a transition year for the Turin Centre as the new Director for the Centre was attending the Board meeting for the first time. The new employers' Training Programme Manager, Arnout de Koster, also attended. The most important item was the discussion on the

Centre's Fourth Development Plan to 2007-2011. Employers saw this as an opportunity to look into the future of the Centre by clearly defining its relationship with the ILO as its training arm, identify ways and means of taking advantage of development aid and positioning itself as the training resource of the United Nations system in view of the UN reform process.

The Employers were also grateful for the consultation process leading to the drafting of the Fourth Development Plan. This process had enabled the Centre to take into account the concerns of employers with regard to programmes on migration and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The course on migration now took into account the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject instead of focussing only on social protection. It would enable the Centre to bring in experts on other migration-related areas such as skills, employability, entrepreneurship and remittances. Unfortunately, the course on discrimination did not take this approach. The employers suggested that diversity should be an important component of it. With regard to the CSR course, the employers stressed that they should be the one to take the lead in this issue and any future work should be done in close collaboration with the MNE Sub-Committee.

Even though the ILO could not considerably increase its regular budget contributions to the Centre, it was possible for employers to work more closely with the Centre in the delivery of its programmes. The Turin Centre was well placed to provide capacity building support for the ILO's technical cooperation programme to ILO staff and its constituents. The Employers' Group also called for regular budget for technical cooperation (RBTC) funds to be allocated to the employers' training programme directly.

One area of potential was for the Employers' Training Programme to offer relevant training programmes for the private sector. For this reason they called for the capacity of the employers' training programme to be increased in order to cater for new training needs.

The Employers' Group was grateful to the Italian Government, Piedmont region, and the City of Turin for their continued financial support for the Centre. It was however felt that a time had come for other governments to consider making direct financial contributions to the Centre.

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