

Interpretation from German: Mr. MUHR (Workers' delegate, Federal Republic of Germany) – I had the honour of supporting your nomination as President of this Conference on behalf of the Workers and I should like to congratulate you on your unanimous election following this nomination; I am sure that you will lead the Conference to a successful conclusion.

When the United Nation was first founded in 1945, we all hoped that the post-war period would usher in a truly peaceful order. Yet, today, 43 years later, we know that this order is still deficient and far too frequently threatened.

Forty years after the pioneering Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the respect for and protection of human dignity cannot be taken for granted. Instances of violation and injustice, oppression and misery demonstrate how much has to be done to establish such elemental human rights. There are also new threats to face which are due to the population explosion, dangers to the environment and the burden of debt in many developing countries. The ILO has a hard task before it to combat these problems. Economic and social obstacles should be done away with as soon as possible since they stand in the way of human rights.

Far too frequently we turn away from the misfortunes of this world and human rights are measured with double standards. When it suits a given political and economic concept, they are publically condemned; not infrequently, they are tolerated when political or economic interests are at stake. However, when human rights are assessed exclusively in the light of nationalistic or economic interests, they lose their moral force and their universal nature. Human rights, peace and freedom are, and will remain, indivisible.

The ILO has the important role of supervising basic human rights in the world of labour and of improving the lot of the poor, as well as that of many workers.

I thank the Director-General for his excellent and exhaustive survey on the social dimension of human rights. He also rightly described the human rights aspect of the ILO's basic social standards. In its

standard-setting activities, the ILO has successfully supplemented the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and made its provisions relevant for workers. It bears witness to the consensus existing at the time it was signed as the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), dates from the same year. The supervisory machinery of the ILO also makes it clear that these rights are not merely moral in nature but also have legal implications.

Unfortunately the rate of ratification has slowed down over the past few years. Even basic instruments such as the Conventions on freedom of association, forced labour or equality of opportunity and treatment have not been ratified by all the member States of the ILO. Even industrialised countries are reticent when it comes to ratifying worthwhile important minimum standards. They opt for a policy of deregulation and flexibility in social attainments in the mistaken belief that they will then be able to compete better in the world market.

What lies behind this policy which is also pursued by the employers in an ill-disguised attempt to reduce real wages, increase inequalities, make jobs less secure and cut social security. Should such a deregulation policy become widespread, not only will the set of values which we have established in the ILO be endangered but we shall not witness the creation of new jobs either in the industrialised countries, or in developing countries; on the contrary.

The industrial countries should be aware of the fact that they bear full responsibility for the unfair economic differences existing between north and south and thus for the ensuing social unrest.

The ILO provides the member States with a platform upon which they can dispel doubts as to their credibility and give us proof of their sincere desire to achieve human rights.

A further requirement is the effective application of standards that have been adopted and ratified. The gulf between the formal adoption of the standards and their actual implementation is very often tremendous.

Human rights should not only be the object of statements but should be translated into reality as soon as possible. The Director-General puts forward in his Report certain practical ideas and suggests actual measures to be taken, for instance, on the extension of Convention No. 111.

Crimes against humanity perpetrated by the system of apartheid in South Africa are among the most serious abuses of human rights. I shall not, go into this subject more deeply at present because there is a special session of the Conference to consider the Director-General's Report on apartheid, and I shall have the opportunity to return to it then.

In many parts of the world the infringement of fundamental trade union rights seems to have become the norm. The many complaints before the ILO testify to this. Time and time again, trade unionists are prevented from doing their work, are persecuted and arrested.

Even in places with long-standing democratic traditions, opportunities for trade unions to exercise their rights in full freedom are often restricted. The upholding of trade union rights is, however, vital to the existence of free, democratic societies.

Trade unions in the Federal Republic of Germany have also had occasion to submit complaints to the

ILO supervisory bodies concerning the non-compliance of Convention No. 87. For instance, under German law civil servants can be called in against their will to replace striking workers. The German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) considers this to be inconsistent with the content and letter of Convention No. 87.

Certain courts have even dismissed trade union protests against economic and social policies of the Federal Government. In this respect too, we have also turned to the ILO supervisory bodies to ensure that protests of this nature in the Federal Republic should not be in dispute.

Basic trade union rights should be upheld everywhere, regardless of the prevailing economic, social or political conditions. In respect of Convention No. 111, our Federal Government had to submit to an extensive procedure and the Committee came to the conclusion that: "the undifferentiated application of the duty of faithfulness to all officials, without regard to the effect which their political attitude or activities may have on the exercise of the functions assigned to them" was not in compliance with the Convention.

The Federal Republic has accepted the procedure and we now expect it to carry out the recommendations by the Committee.

Over and above its standard-setting and supervisory activities, the ILO must also work towards making available to all people the economic and social means necessary for them to attain their right to human dignity. We must constantly bear in mind that human rights are not only denied by dictators but also through poverty and a lack of opportunity. Freedom from fear and freedom from want are inextricably linked. The weakest and most disadvantaged members of our society have to bear the brunt of the present employment and distribution crisis.

Approximately 900 million people now live in abject poverty. The situation is particularly depressing in Africa, where the number of the poor will probably double between 1980 and 1995.

Yet the world spends approximately \$1,000 billion every year on armaments. People would not go hungry if the money, instead of being spent on arms of extermination, would be spent in order to improve the quality of life and to close the gulf between poor and rich, developing and industrialised countries.

Many countries are on the brink of economic bankruptcy and are fighting for their bare survival. It is vital that the highly indebted countries of the Third World should have prospects for the future and a real chance to overcome their economic problems.

A new international development strategy is necessary, as was pointed out by the High-Level Meeting on Employment and Structural Change. Industrialised countries not only have a special responsibility to bring about necessary adjustments in the world economy and reduce protectionism but also to find a solution to the debt problem of the developing countries.

One of the specific tasks of the ILO is to ensure that when working out adjustment programmes, ILO standards should not be undermined. At the same time, the social needs and problems of the poorer segments of society must be taken into account and the participation of workers' and employers' organisations secured.

More than ever we need a universal binding set of values, which will become legal standards for all

States and not be questioned by any government, even in a case of emergency.

The ILO's system of standards constitutes a good basis upon which social and human rights can be made a driving force; it is also a cornerstone for a true world order based on peace without hunger and without need. We must not flag in our attempts to attain this common goal.