



ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DES EMPLOYEURS
ORGANIZACION INTERNACIONAL DE EMPLEADORES
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF EMPLOYERS

Report on the 295 Session of the ILO Governing Body

BUSA COO, Vic Van Vuuren attended a meeting of the ILO Governing Body at the end of March 2006. The International Employers Organisation provided the following report on this meeting

“Change” was an underlying theme of this session of the Governing Body. For sometime now the Employers’ Group has been pushing the view that the ILO needs to rethink the way in which it works if it is to remain credible and relevant in the future, particularly to employers. Previous debates on Governing Body and International Labour Conference reform have failed to ignite consolidated support from amongst governments in the face of Workers’ Group resistance.

This session, however, saw a strong shift in at least governments’ engagement in these issues. A Working Group on Conference Reform met for the first time (see below for more information) with the employers and governments sharing many ideas on how to revitalize the working methods and content of what is the ILO’s premier policy-making body. This concurrence of views augurs well for future reform discussions and may hopefully realize improvements that can be quickly introduced into forthcoming Conferences. Workers continue to resist change, but our feeling is that governments have reached a point where they are not going to back away from the need to effect improvements and will no longer simply accept “no” as an answer.

Similarly, reform is on the agenda of the Employers’ Group within the Committee on Freedom of Association, the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards and, more generally, within all committees of the Governing Body in the ongoing push to improve the governance role of the Governing Body.

Too often, in the lengthy agendas of the various committees, decisions are not clear, follow-up is uncertain and responsibility for action is not properly delegated. This can leave the Office without a clear sense of what is required of it or what the Governing Body expects.

Efforts are now being made to ensure that, at the end of each debate, the key issues and action points are clearly addressed in the reports to the Governing Body, thereby providing the clarity of action such decisions require. This has proven particularly effective recently in the work of the MNE Subcommittee and now within the Employment and Social Policy Committee. This clarity also helps in developing a strategic approach to the work of the committees and the information exchange with the Office.

Change is never easy, but it now appears that the need for change is more widely understood, which will be helpful in taking these issues forward in subsequent sessions.

An important issue remains – that of trying to keep the ILO focused on its mandate. Changes within the UN more generally and other efforts to take the ILO debates beyond its 2 constituents pose particular challenges. Throughout these discussions the Employers’ Group continues to emphasize that the ILO needs to be developing and delivering an agenda that meets the needs and expectations of its constituents and that its resources – which are limited- are used in areas where the ILO can have the most impact on issues relating to the world of work. The ILO is a specialized UN agency with a clear focus and mandate. This specialization needs to be understood in wider reform debates as the ILO

is not like the UNDP or UNCTAD that have a more general development role. Its focus needs to be where its constituents are drawn from - namely, the workplace.

This is particularly true when the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) are discussed. Whilst focusing on local needs is positive, we need to ensure that the local debates themselves remain rooted in the ILO's mandate and do not result in ILO resources being diverted into wider development agendas, no matter how worthy they may be. At the heart of the success of these DWCPs is the development of strong social partners. The resources of the Office must be used to support the social partners to ensure that the needs of their members are reflected in the DWCPs and that they are then able to participate fully in its implementation and play the important national role of serving their members.

GOVERNING BODY ILC GENERAL DISCUSSION 2007

While the paper concerning the 2007 Conference General Discussion on 'Strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization' was only before the Governing Body for information, it still elicited considerable debate. It was clear from the discussions that followed that there is still considerable confusion as to what exactly the purpose of this Conference discussion is. A number of IMEC governments noted their concerns over any discussion which sought to expand the ILO's mandate, which in the view of one government would 'lead the ILO to irrelevance'. Others noted that it was premature at this stage to draw conclusions on what such a debate may deliver.

As expressed by the Employers' Group during the Informal Consultations that took place in February 2006 on this topic, the employers continue to see potential in this discussion since it could be used as a valuable means of ensuring greater input by the constituents into the work of the Office. The employers will continue to closely monitor this debate as it develops between now and 2007. For more information about the ongoing developments in this debate, please contact Sandy Gros-Louis at gros-louis@ioe-emp.org

AGENDA OF THE 2008 INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

From the outset of the debate, several members of the GB expressed serious concerns with the current procedure for selecting new items for the ILC agenda. A large majority –including the employer members – perceive this debate as time-consuming and inefficient.

This concern coincided with the Governing Body's decision to set up a Working Group to review the functioning of its decision-making bodies – namely the ILC and the GB. This time around, all proposals put forward by the Office to be included in the ILC agenda for 2008 were topics for General Discussion, which was of concern to the Workers' Group.

Predictably, the latter would have hoped to see at least one proposal for standard-setting. As a result of the debate, the following two topics have been selected for the 2008 ILC:

- Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development (General Discussion); and

- Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction (General Discussion based on an integrated approach).

It is worth noting that the Governing Body decided to leave one empty slot for a third topic that would be decided at a later stage. It is possible that the 2007 Conference General Discussion on “Strengthening the ILO’s capacity to discharge its core missions and promote decent work for all at the outset of the twenty-first century” will provide for an item for the 2008 Conference (and might involve standard-setting).

Finally, the Workers’ Group has proposed four new topics that could be developed as possible future ILC agenda items: (i) Work at Exporting Processing Zones; (ii) Consultation with Trade Unions during enterprises re-structuring processes; (iii) HIV-AIDS in the Workplace; and (iv) International Monitoring of transnational supply chains.

The Employers’ Group will also submit its suggestions for future topics to the Office.

MYANMAR

At the last session of the Governing Body, it was decided that the question of Myanmar would be addressed at this session in the hope that, in the interim, the Government of Myanmar would be more cooperative with the ILO in exploring avenues towards the elimination of forced labour in the country. However, there had been no change and it was apparent that there was no chance of fruitful dialogue. Consequently, the Governing Body adopted a resolution to place the question of Myanmar as an item on the agenda of this year’s International Labour Conference.

ILO DECENT WORK PRIZE

The Governing Body took note of the decision taken in November 2005 by the 47th session of the Board of the International Institute for Labour Studies to create a research prize to reward outstanding contributions to the advancement of knowledge on key ILO concerns.

The first ILO Decent Work Prize will be awarded early in 2007 and the formal presentation will be made at the June 2007 session of the International Labour Conference.

The jury will be composed of five eminent personalities – one each from the three tripartite constituents, with a profile in the field of international labour and social policy, and two distinguished academics. This jury will be established by mid-2006 in consultation with the tripartite constituents and will start its examination of the nominations by early 2007.

MARITIME CONVENTION:

This past February, the 94th International Labour Conference, at its Maritime Session, adopted the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 by 314 votes in favour and none against. The standard consolidates and updates more than 65 international labour standards adopted over the last 80 years. At this session of the Governing Body, the constituents duly congratulated the ILO for all its efforts leading up to the adoption of the Convention that is being praised as an undisputed success.

A few lessons should be taken from the successful experience of the Maritime Labour Convention. First, this is a Convention that had the strong support of both the employers and workers, which highlights the importance and benefit of ensuring that subjects chosen for Conventions are fully supported by the social partners. Secondly, five years of extensive preparatory work went into this Convention before the final meeting in February. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Convention will not come into force until 12 months after ratification by 30 Members representing at least 33 per cent of the world gross tonnage of ships. Unlike most ILO instruments that come into force following the ratification by only a few member States, the high number of ratifications required for this instrument to come into force will protect its credibility by ensuring that it enjoys significant support by the industry before it becomes binding.

It is hoped that the ILO will draw from the useful lessons learned through this experience and will apply them when drawing up future instruments.

COMMITTEES OF THE GOVERNING BODY - ILC REFORM

Reform provides for a virtuous circle, meaning that, by improving the functioning of the Conference, its political role is enhanced. Too often concerns have been raised about the long duration and the mismanagement of the time of the ILC. These negative features have on occasion deterred the active participation of social partners representatives, to whom the time commitment required to attend the whole ILC is often not realistic.

During its November 2005 session, the GB decided to set up a Working Party to come up with proposals for possible improvements to the functioning of the ILC. The Working Party began its work at the present session. Eight representatives from each of the tripartite constituents were part of the Working Group. In preparation, the employer representatives drew up a written proposal with specific suggestions that reflected the views expressed by employers in the debates held during the past years (please refer to the IOE website: www@ioe-emp.org).

The main element of the employers' proposal was to improve the participation of national tripartite delegations whilst strengthening the political and technical roles of the Conference. This would be achieved by separating both roles and exercising them at different times – i.e. the ILO would hold shorter “technical” and “political” Conferences in alternate years. The proposal met with strong support by the Government representatives of the Working Party. However, as expected, the Workers' Group opposed reform efforts.

As a compromise, and in particular to accommodate the workers' apprehensions, the Working Group agreed to resume its work during the forthcoming ILC in June. The workers have committed themselves to present their suggestions for improvement in writing.

WORKING PARTY ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF GLOBALIZATION

The Working Party opened its session with an intervention by the European Commissioner, Louis Michel, who provided the Working Party with an insight into European development policies. While highly thought-provoking, the exact purpose of his visit was unclear, especially considering that the GB agenda was so full.

Three papers came before the Working Party. The more substantial of the three dealt with the follow-up to the Report of the UN World Summit (September 2005) and its implications for the ILO. While the paper certainly over-emphasized the consequences for the ILO from this Report, it was useful in provoking debate on the ILO's role and mandate.

The paper suggested a number of areas of work as a result of the Report (some new and some already part of existing ILO programmes). Employers and a great number of governments expressed concern about the suitability of raising such issues in a Working Party paper (noting that the Working Party is not a decision-making body) and suggested that they form part of discussions on the programme for the next biennium the November Governing Body.

The Working Party also had before it a paper (for information) it on the ongoing work of the Policy Coherence Initiative (PCI). The PCI was one of the major recommendations from the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and a number of technical meetings on this have been held. It has been an extremely useful exercise in sensitizing the ILO to the views and perspectives of sister organizations, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions. The Working Party will be kept updated on developments as the work of the PCI continues.

The last paper, concerning a decision on the proposed ILO Globalization Policy Forum, was the one that caused the greatest debate. Employers had on two previous occasions rejected this proposal on the basis of their concerns regarding costs, objectives and purpose of the Forum, as well as concerns over governance. However, it was clear that the workers and a majority of governments were in favour. While employers again rejected the proposal put forward by the Office the Chairman of the Governing Body, in an attempt to break the deadlock, presented a compromise proposal. This proposal goes some way towards addressing a number of the major employer concerns. It is also much more grounded in the areas of the ILO's mandate. It was agreed that this compromise text was a suitable basis for future consultations at Officers' level. The June Governing Body will receive an update.

COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In recent sessions of the CFA, the Employers' Group has expressed discontent with some of the decisions that the Committee has taken in the past, particularly with regard to the "right to strike" and "essential services". The employers, not wanting at this stage to disrupt the tradition of consensus-based decision-making that has existed in the CFA for the past 50 years, have stressed the need to begin a dialogue to address these concerns. At this session, the worker members of the CFA officially responded to the issues that had previously been raised by the employers. It is hoped that this will lead to a process of dialogue through which the concerns of employers can be addressed.

In the context of individual cases, the employers continued to present arguments in support of their positions and, in some cases, made significant progress. Two cases stand out in this respect:

The case of Canada (Case No. 2405) addressed a trade union's allegations that the Government had violated the principles of freedom of association by introducing legislation relating to matters that had traditionally been included in collective agreements – such as classroom size. The employers argued in favour of the inclusion of a clause in the conclusions and the recommendations that explicitly recognizes that the determination of the broad lines of educational policy is for the State to do and is not a matter

for collective bargaining between competent authorities and teachers' organizations.

The case of Guatemala (Case No. 2413) dealt with trade union demonstrations against the signature of a free trade agreement with the US. The workers argued that they should have recourse to strikes to "find solutions to problems posed by major social and economic policy trends which have a direct impact on workers". The employers, on the other hand, argued that the strike was purely political in nature and therefore did not fall within the scope of the principles of freedom of association. Predictably, there was disagreement between the workers and employers as to the type of issues that are of a "purely political nature" and those that have "a direct impact". The Committee took the position that the strike was acceptable on the basis that protests of this nature have been traditionally viewed by the Committee as falling within the principles of freedom of association. This case serves to illustrate the importance of taking steps towards a process of review as mentioned above.

The ILO has released a publication entitled: "Employers' Organizations and the ILO supervisory machinery" which contains information about how the ILO's supervisory machinery has been and continues to be used by Employers' Organizations. For more information, please contact Sandy Gros-Louis (gros-louis@ioe-emp.org).

COMMITTEE ON LEGAL ISSUES AND INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS

Once again the LILS addressed the important matter of ILO standards reform. In this context, the Employers' Group reiterated its full support for the Office proposal to elaborate a conceptual framework with a view to conducting research on the economic impact of international labour standards.

The conceptual framework will focus on the specific economic dynamics of ILO standards, with a view to developing a wider approach to understanding how standards play a role in economic development or stagnation. The analysis should seek to move beyond a classical approach to a cost and benefit analysis and try to bring in a wider perspective which takes into account the role of standards in the formation of human and social capital, their impact on productivity, innovation and wage development, as well as their effects in relation to trade competitiveness, the rule of law, demand stimulation, public image and social stability.

The conceptual framework will be developed through a process sponsored by the Dutch Government and will involve holding a workshop during the second half of 2006, where it is hoped that an initial draft will be prepared. The draft will then be presented to the Governing Body in March 2007 for final approval.

The process should involve employers' and workers' representatives, ILO experts in the fields of standards and employment and, in particular, it should include experts from other international agencies with experience in these matters - such as the OECD and the World Bank. It is hoped that the conceptual framework will be a useful tool for ILO member States to objectively assess the pros and cons of ratifying ILO Conventions.

Also related to the ILO standards debate, employers highlighted that the ILO should carry out continuous efforts to review and update its body of standards. The previous revision exercise conducted by the ILO already some years ago excluded the analysis of Conventions adopted after 1985. Within those

Conventions there are several that have not enjoyed wide ratification and that would therefore require a decision by the ILO to either revise or promote them.

Regarding the issue of ILO supervision of international labour standards, there was a request from governments to hold informal consultations on the functioning of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards. The Employers' Group supported this request. Concerning proposals to promote ILO Conventions, the employers reiterated their long-standing position that resources and efforts should continue to focus on the ratification of the eight Fundamental ILO Conventions before resources are allocated elsewhere.

Another very important matter dealt within the LILS agenda concerned a proposal for this year's Conference debate of the Global Report as part of the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In the past, the GB has been unsuccessful in finding the right formula to deal with the Declaration's follow-up and the adhoc procedures that have been used in the past have resulted in long and unproductive debates. The ad-hoc arrangement used last year will be replicated for the 2006 ILC debate but with some specific re-adjustments. The details of such a procedure will be worked out in consultation with the social partners. The Office has been asked to make further efforts to come up with a better and more definitive solution in the near future.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES

CSR continued to be the dominant theme in the MNE Subcommittee. Among the main subjects of discussion was the strategic plan for the Office's In-Focus Initiative on CSR (the "IFI"). Given that the Office had conducted significant consultations with the Secretariats of both groups prior to the meeting the discussion in the Subcommittee was positive and supportive of the programme of work proposed for the IFI.

Also important in this session was the finalization of the 8th Survey on the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (the "MNE Declaration"). The Survey process for the MNE Declaration is an important way to ensure its legitimacy. Since the November 2005 session, the Officers of the Subcommittee have agreed to a final set of conclusions and recommendations which, in combination with the IFI, will be added to the Office's work plan. Though these conclusions and recommendations were fully supported by the Subcommittee, the low response rate to the 8th Survey was raised as a concern. Alternatives were therefore discussed for the next time the Survey is conducted. The Employers' Group reinforced the importance of the survey, since it serves to demonstrate the positive contribution of MNEs – something that is frequently the subject of debate.

Promoting the MNE Declaration continues to be a challenge for the Subcommittee. Next year will be the 30th anniversary of the MNE Declaration and the Subcommittee has agreed that the opportunity should be used for a promotional event. Given the Subcommittee's overwhelming support, the funds for the 30th anniversary event were approved by Governing Body. The details of the event will be developed through close consultations with the social partners.

Finally, the Subcommittee has worked hard to raise the Office's accountability regarding its involvement in CSR. As such, reports were provided to the Subcommittee on the Office's involvement both within and outside the Office. For the first time, the Turin Centre was also asked to report on its activities

relative to CSR. The report from Turin confirmed our belief that it has been working on CSR without sufficient involvement from the social partners. The Turin Centre was advised that, in going forward, it must ensure that the social partners are involved in the development and implementation of its CSR-related programmes.

The Subcommittee has asked that the International Institute for Labour Studies provide a similar update at the next session.

PROGRAMME, FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

This PFA session was largely an intermediary step in the preparation of the next Programme and Budget 2008-09, which will be discussed for the first time in November 2006 and then finally in March 2007. The first important document was an explanation of how the Office would implement result-based management (RBM) at the ILO. This document was in response to the criticisms expressed by the Joint Inspection Unit and many GB members last November about the ILO's poor human resources management. RBM is a tool that, if properly applied, should help facilitate the delivery of the work of the ILO and increase its performance.

Unfortunately, the ILO approach might create more bureaucracy within the Office to monitor the RBM process, which will most likely be paid by further decreasing technical cooperation activities and services to constituents. It is hoped that, when the PFA holds its first discussion on the Programme and Budget 2008-09 in November, these concerns will have been heard by the Office; the Employers' Group will pay careful attention as to how RBM is included by the Office.

The second important paper concerned the implementation report of the Programme and Budget 2004-05. This discussion was important, as it allowed constituents to see how the Office performed against its targets and objectives for that biennium. Despite some positive outcomes noted in the report, the document remains of limited value given its structure and tone. The Employers' Group would have preferred a report of activities that clearly presented the strategy and the methodology used by the Office in achieving its objectives, some reflections on delivery failures, as well as the identification and application of lessons learned.

On the other hand, it was an opportunity to give an initial indication of the Group's priorities, as the Office will soon start the preparation of the draft 2008-09 Programme and Budget.

One key element of these two debates was the discussion on the implementation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes. These programmes, supported by the Employers' Group, will involve the social partners to develop an ILO work plan for technical co-operation at the national level. Unfortunately, the implementation of these has been very slow and only a few of them are currently ongoing. Whilst recognizing the value of a coherent and focused technical co-operation programme at the national level, the Office should not focus all its activities and resources on these programmes, since not all of the ILO's products and services are best delivered at the national level.

The PFA also discussed the place of the Turin Centre within the ILO and how to improve its cooperation with the various departments within the Office. The Employers' Group repeated its strong support for the Centre as the key element in the development and provision of training for constituents. As external

donors provide 80% of its budget, the Centre needs the political support of the ILO in its dialogue with donors. It further needs to develop the necessary programme flexibility that would make the Centre attractive to donors.

The Employers' Group also requested better cooperation between the Centre, ILO headquarters and field offices to avoid an overlapping of activities.

The current Director, M. Tremeaud, retires in April. The Group expressed its thanks to him for his work over many years on behalf of the Centre and hoped that his replacement would continue his good work with constituents.

Finally, last November a revised ILO HR strategy was adopted. This session was provided with an update on its implementation. Given the short period since November, not much has been implemented and the Employers' Group's concerns regarding the downgrading of positions, the delays in recruitment and the HR responsibilities of management remain as yet unanswered. The Group hopes that more will have been achieved by the time the strategy is discussed again in November.

COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The Committee on Technical Cooperation had an agenda of six items, all of which were submitted for information and none of which had any points for decision. Given the concern that has been expressed in the past about the absence of points for decision, the Group again stressed that there needed to be the right mix of papers for consideration. It was also felt that the Office needed to give specific information on what action had been taken to implement and follow-up on decisions taken by the Committee

Decent work country programmes and the role of technical co-operation

Here the Employers' Group was disappointed that the paper did not provide details on concrete technical cooperation activities that had been undertaken under the decent work framework. Moreover, there was little information on how many Decent Work Country Programmes had been finalized; how the social partners had actually been involved in consultations; and whether their priorities were adequately taken into account. As the Office moves towards integrating the decent work agendas into development frameworks of countries and the wider UN system, it is important that it bear in mind the need to build the capacity of national employers' organizations. The Group supported the point for decision adopted by the Committee that the Director-General provides the Committee on Technical Cooperation at all its November sessions with a progress report on the implementation of decent work country programmes and the role and impact of technical cooperation.

A thematic evaluation report on HIV/AIDS and the world of work.

It was the first time that the HIV/AIDS programme has reported to the Committee. Though technical cooperation projects under the programme only started in 2003, the employers were pleased that those under review had yielded positive qualitative and quantitative outcomes although a lot more was required, particularly in terms of project conception and selection of partners. The Group was concerned that the Office continued to engage more with NGOs in its dealings with the informal economy instead of with employers' organizations that could provide the same support. The Employers' Group, with the support

of the Workers' Group, called on the Office to give more support to these programmes in terms of resources, to more actively support the work being done by the social partners under the IOE/ICFTU agreement to combat the pandemic in the workplace and to report regularly to the Committee on progress made.

The future of thematic evaluation reports and overall evaluation strategy

The Employers' Group restated its position that the mandate of the Technical Cooperation Committee was to review the ILO's technical cooperation activities and that thematic evaluations were part and parcel of this review. Such reports were crucial to the Committee as it informed them on what had worked, what had not worked and lessons learned. This view was supported by the Workers' Group and many governments and the status quo of such reports coming before the Committee will remain

A report on operational aspects of the IPEC programme

This was a standard item and reported on the IPEC Steering Committee meeting held in November 2005. The Employers' Group expressed concerns that the information it had requested in November on the financial breakdown of monetary allocations under the IPEC programmes to implementing agencies was not provided. Again the Group also called on the IPEC Programme not to bypass the social partners in favour of NGOs.

Special technical cooperation programme for Colombia

The employers recalled the point for decision adopted by the Committee in March 2005 that called on the ILO to redouble its resource mobilization efforts in order to continue the programme and regretted that there were no real commitments from donors in this regard.

The Group again supported the programme for the positive outcomes it was having on conditions in the country.

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

This session of the ESP was divided into two parts. This first consisted of completing 'unfinished business' whilst the second was about looking forward.

The "unfinished business" was the final review of the last two remaining Global Employment Agenda (GEA) papers (one on OSH and one on Skills). In the OSH paper an important and new (for the ILO) concept was introduced, that of linking OSH to productivity; this was welcome. The paper was not without its faults – namely the attempts to link a CSR element to OSH, which were unhelpful. However, by and large this was a useful paper. The Skills paper was weaker and was more notable for what it omitted rather than what it included. However there was a broad and fairly frank admission on the part of the Office that its capacities in this area need to be improved considerably. For a sector of such prime importance, especially for employers, this is welcome admission (note that there has been three 'skills' related discussions at ILCs in the last five years).

Notwithstanding the fact that skills is a shared responsibility, employers noted in particular in their

interventions the role of employers in this domain and offered the Office its cooperation in up-scaling its capacities (in terms of sharing and replicating tools, best practices, linkages with companies and technology, etc).

The second part of the session addressed the Committee's future work. For some time, Committee members have had major concerns on the governance aspects of the ESP.

For instance, only three out of the 20 papers reviewed over the last two years have included points for decision; only two policy statements have been approved over the last four years; and at least six out of the 13 decisions taken over the last four years have NOT been fully implemented. Clearly this is a problem.

The 'vision' paper for the future not only of the Employment Sector but also importantly connecting the Committee to the work of the Employment Sector and the discussions around that document did much to alleviate those concerns. In terms of policy areas and activities, the paper places a welcome focus on the national level. Priority areas for the immediate future are employment as central to economic and social policies; youth employment; and the informal economy. Africa has been given a special focus. Employers continued to express concerns about the focus on macro-economic policy (in terms of the first priority).

Overall this session of the ESP was remarkably refreshing. It is clear that the new Executive Director wants to take a new and open approach. Going forward it has been agreed to try and look at ESP agendas over a longer period. For the remainder of this GB mandate – i.e. for the next two years – space will be provided for strategic considerations. It has also been agreed to shape sessions under three baskets: a) country case study evaluations (this will include one tripartite evaluation and one broader evaluation of the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) carried out by the evaluation unit); b) programme evaluation (of either the Social Protection or the Employment sectors) and c) policy discussions.

The three separate elements will be allocated a space to be discussed/evaluated over the two yearly Committee sessions. Papers will also be better shaped with, for instance, the inclusion of a point for decision in all 'programme evaluation' papers. An extended Officers' meeting will be held before the Committee starts its work to allow more in-depth discussions and briefings from the Office (in some respects it will act as a 'filtering mechanism'). Such a process will also assist with better follow-up (for instance to the Skills Department in light of the discussions at this session).

In terms of the agenda for the next session, two policy areas will come under review (business environment, labour law and micro and small enterprises; and wage policy); the two programmes for review will be Labour Inspection and Youth Employment (including evaluation of the Youth Employment Network). The Social Protection Sector will produce a 'checklist' similar to the one produced by the Employment Sector (outlining key areas of work and priorities). As November will have an extra session, there will be two further papers: one on an GEA update and one outlining the Office follow-up to all decisions taken since the start of the GEA process.

The provisional agenda for March 2007 includes a policy discussion on collective bargaining and economic development; the programmes to be reviewed will be the Informal Economy, the PRSP process and the Global Social Trust Fund. It has been decided to have two country evaluations (one by the evaluation

unit and one under the new ESP review mechanism). This is envisaged now for March 2007 and 2008.

COMMITTEE ON SECTORAL AND TECHNICAL MEETINGS AND RELATED ISSUES

Three items were given particular attention at this session of the Committee:

Tripartite Meeting on Promoting Fair Globalization in Textiles and Clothing in a Post- MFA Environment (Geneva, 24-26 October 2005)

Whilst expressing their satisfaction with the meeting itself and, generally, with its results, the employers recalled their concern with one of the conclusions of the Chairperson's report. This stated that "the ILO should promote policy coherence between it and the WTO, the Bretton Woods and other international institutions and make recommendations to promote fair globalization in the Textiles and Clothing sector". Such a conclusion, the employers feared, could be used by the ILO and others to justify the introduction of a "social clause" in the textile trade.

Although it did not give concrete examples of the activities envisaged with regard to policy coherence, the Office responded that it was clearly out of question for it to go beyond the position taken by the Governing Body on this issue.

Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (Geneva, 31 October-2 November 2005)

This meeting of experts adopted a text incorporating 15 principles covering decent work, protection of migrant workers, management of labour migration and migration development linkages, with detailed guidelines to help translate those principles into practice.

Within the Committee discussions, several governments expressed their concerns about the wording of the preamble of the non-binding multilateral framework. This drafting, indeed, suggested that the framework had to be adopted by the Governing Body of the ILO, thereby officially adopting the framework as an ILO text.

This was not what was intended and the text was not adopted by the Governing Body.

Instead, the Governing Body simply took note of the report of the meeting of experts and authorized the Director-General to publish it as a report of the meeting.

Meeting of Experts on Updating the List of Occupational Diseases (Geneva, 13-20 December 2005)

This meeting of experts had ended in a deadlock and did not produce any revised / updated list of occupational diseases. As such it was agreed only to take note of the report of the meeting. The Governing Body was asked to convene another meeting of experts in 2008- 09, after due consultations with the constituents for the purposes of preparing common ground as to the mandate of the meeting.

OTHER MATTERS:

The Committee also agreed on three sectoral meetings to be held between September 2006 and April 2007.