

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

SEVENTH AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE
(Harare, 29 November-7 December 1988)

PROVISIONAL RECORD

SEVENTH SITTING

Friday, 2 December 1988, 9.30 a.m.

Presidents: Mr. Nkomo, Mr. Mugalla

THIRD REPORT OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE:
SUBMISSION AND ADOPTION

The PRESIDENT - We begin with the third report of the Selection Committee.

I shall now invite the Chairman, Mr. Moussa Ndoeye, Government delegate, Senegal, to come to the rostrum and submit the report.

Interpretation from French: Mr. NDOYE (Government delegate, Senegal; Chairman of the Selection Committee) - I have the honour to submit to the Conference the third report of the Selection Committee which today only contains one item, namely changes in the composition of the Conference Committees. I kindly request the Conference to adopt this report.

The PRESIDENT - If there are no objections the report is adopted.

(The report is adopted.)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DISCUSSION (cont.)

The PRESIDENT - Before resuming the discussion of the Report of the Director-General may I kindly ask all the honourable delegates who are due to take the floor to take into consideration the time-limit of 15 minutes established by article 11, paragraph 6, of the Rules concerning the Powers, Functions and Procedure of the Regional Conferences Convened by the International Labour Organisation.

I have further been made aware that article 19 of the said Rules does not allow speeches or parts of speeches not delivered at the Conference to be reproduced in this record. Although the decision which I took yesterday with regard to the part of the speech not delivered by Mr. Nyakatura must stand since it has been formally recorded, it will of course be my responsibility to ensure that for the remainder of this debate these various provisions are respected and I know that I can fully count on your co-operation.

Furthermore, I would like to remind delegates that their statements should refer exclusively to the issues dealt with in the Director-General's Report.

Interpretation from French: Mr. MADOUGOU (Government delegate, Niger) - The delegation of the Republic of Niger, which I have the honour to lead, welcomes the convening of this Conference here in the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Allow me, Mr. President, on behalf of the Niger delegation, to congratulate you on your election to preside over our sittings. My congratulations are also addressed to Mr. Blanchard, the Director-General, and to the members of the Governing Body of the ILO for the excellent quality of the reports submitted to us for discussion.

Allow me to express our satisfaction at the choice of subjects for discussion as they are a perfect reflection of the problems currently encountered in all our countries, and in Niger in particular.

I am convinced that the quality of the documents before us and the contributions of the various participants will enable us to formulate strategies for making the best and most efficient and rational use of available human resources.

Faced with a hostile world economy, our greatest potential is undoubtedly our ability to organise, to train and to improve the value of our human resources.

We have examined with great attention the reports dealing with training in rural and urban areas, condition of women in Africa and apartheid.

Allow me quickly to outline my country's experience in these areas. Convinced that development demands the effective participation of the entire population, Niger has opted for integrated development at the grass-roots level.

The necessary infrastructure to enable the people of Niger to participate fully in economic development has accordingly been established.

The country's sectoral policy guide-lines have been laid down in our National Charter, which was an outcome of a broad-based consultation undertaken by the Supreme Military Council and the Government. It was adopted on 14 June 1987 after a national referendum.

As far as the rural sector is concerned, the Nigerian Government has always aimed at food self-sufficiency.

National development therefore coincides with rural development, i.e. the exploitation of our agricultural, forest, grazing and handicraft resources, and the constant improvement of the living conditions of our farmers, stockbreeders and artisans.

Our rural development policy aims at transforming Niger's agricultural sector to make it the catalyst of our overall development, and public information campaigns have been organised to mobilise all the productive forces of our society within the National Development Council.

Training and further training for young farmers are conducted in all the rural training centres.

The training provided in these centres is designed to improve productivity in rural areas, to introduce appropriate techniques to meet the needs of rural areas, to provide better management of food production, to provide primary health care, to manufacture the necessary tools for production and to control natural disasters.

As far as co-operatives are concerned, we are seeking to create the conditions most conducive to their development. The basic options of our economic and social

development plan, together with the conclusions of a round table on the rural sector, accord the utmost importance to the organisation of rural co-operatives.

The main objective is to train the workers in co-operatives so that they can manage their own affairs.

In the employment sector, our training policy is determined by our concern to establish a global, properly adapted and integrated system of training so that we can meet the future needs of our country in terms of quality and quantity.

Despite all our efforts much remains to be done, considering the needs of our national economy, the development of new techniques and the determination of the public authorities to promote a spirit of private enterprise in the field of job creation.

Vocational training is provided by training centres which are open to young people who have just graduated from secondary school.

With a view to achieving a perfect balance between training and employment, studies are currently being undertaken to identify the real training needs of the country in the public, semi-public and private sectors.

For all the delegations here at this Conference, Harare symbolises the freedom of all peoples and nations to which the international community and the ILO all aspire.

Niger has always proclaimed its faith in human values and its determination to promote respect for human rights.

It is in this spirit that we make every possible use of our schools and mass media to publicise the crimes against humanity perpetrated under the policy of apartheid.

Convinced that the abolition of South Africa's policy is the responsibility of all the nations of the world, Niger continues to implement effectively the measures decided upon to combat a regime based on violence and racial discrimination.

Only recently, on the occasion of the national days of support for the South African people, a town square was named after the Black leader Nelson Mandela.

Women and young people are a very important component of Niger's population, and the National Charter makes special provision for the promotion of women and for their treatment according to the principle of non-discrimination.

For the public authorities, the integration of women in the development process is a social and economic necessity.

Although progress has been made in this respect, most women are still obliged to perform the most unrewarding tasks. They have to bear the combined burden of agricultural work and household chores, which is responsible for premature ageing and a high rate of infant mortality.

Our last five-year plan included measures designed to abolish totally all prejudices and barriers to the participation of women in the work of national construction.

The measures include encouraging women to raise their level of education and training in all fields, creating an appropriate infrastructure to relieve women of their domestic chores, and especially water-carrying, and helping women to engage in rural activities in which they can contribute valuably to the modernisation of the agricultural sector.

In addition to promoting many women to the highest positions in the country, we are currently drawing up a family code which will ensure that women enjoy their full social rights.

This is the contribution that the delegation of Niger wishes to make to this debate.

Mr. DELEZA (Minister of Labour, Malawi) - Before I begin my speech, please allow me to convey to you, Mr. President, and through you to the Government and the people of Zimbabwe and the ILO, the greetings and best wishes from His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda of the Republic of Malawi.

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to address the Seventh African Regional Conference of the ILO which is taking place in this beautiful city of Harare, Zimbabwe.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and wish you all the best for the successful deliberations of our Conference.

First of all, allow me to express, on behalf of the Malawi delegation and indeed on my own behalf, our thanks and gratitude to the Government and people of Zimbabwe for the warm reception we have received since our arrival in Harare. I want also to express my thanks and gratitude to the ILO and the Zimbabwe Government for the excellent facilities which have been put at our disposal at this Conference.

The agenda of this Conference contains very important issues for discussion. There is the Report of the Director-General of the ILO on the political situation in South Africa, the position of women in Africa and their role in national development. The other items on the agenda include rural and urban training and co-operatives.

The role of women in national development has in recent years become a major theme and this should be considered from economic, social and political aspects. In the case of Malawi, women mainly stayed at home and did housework until the arrival of His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, in 1958 when he formed the mighty Malawi Congress Party with the League of Malawi Women as an integral part of the Malawi Congress Party. Indeed, in addition to the League of Malawi Women, His Excellency the Life President also established the League of Malawi Youth. The participation of women and the youth in the social, economic and political life of the country has been very much enhanced by the wisdom and guidance of His Excellency the Life President. The League of Malawi Women has been active in all areas of development through participation in political, cultural and economic activities.

The National Commission for Women in Development which was established by the Government in 1984 as a co-ordinating body involved in integration of women in national development has, inter alia, the objectives of promoting and assisting the establishment of institutions, co-ordinating women's programmes in various fields and promoting greater awareness among people especially in the rural areas.

The formation of Chitukuko Cha Amai M'Malawi (CCAM), the Organisation of Women in Development in Malawi, within the Office of the President and Cabinet in 1985, has further reinforced improvement of the status of women in Malawi. The CCAM's objectives are to give greater practical expression to the role that women can play in national development, through income-generating activities. Through CCAM, women of all walks of life, regardless of race, colour or creed, work together as a team. The CCAM and the National Commission for Women in Development are very complementary in carrying out their activities.

The question of rural and urban training in Africa is the second item on the agenda of the Conference. A major characteristic of the employment problem in Africa is that there is an increasing labour supply but a restricted volume of paid-employment opportunities - coupled with underemployment in the urban informal sector. It is for this reason that training is vital for both wage and self-employment.

During the past two decades, Malawi has greatly benefited from the ILO's technical assistance. Institutions such as the Malawi Entrepreneurial Development Institution (MEDI), the Malawi College of Accountancy, the Hotel Training School and the Kamuzu Vocational Rehabilitation and Training Centre in Magomero, Chiradzulu District for the disabled have all received the support of the ILO.

In addition, the ILO has, through the African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC), based here in Harare, continued to play an important role in the training of labour administrators and factories inspectors.

The establishment of co-operatives in Malawi, as in other English-speaking African countries, was introduced by the British colonial administration. A co-operative legislation introduced in 1946 made provisions for the regulation of the establishment of co-operative societies and the appointment of a Registrar of co-operative societies, who is responsible for registering, auditing, supervising, arbitrating and dissolving co-operative societies.

The development of co-operative societies in Malawi is consistent with the Government's policy which stresses the need for support of the rural sector of the economy, such as the granting of agricultural loans, the provision of transport for collection of agricultural produce and the marketing thereof. In the urban centres, co-operatives are predominantly used for mobilising savings and provisions of loans and capital for small-scale business ventures.

Before I conclude, may I, on behalf of the Malawi delegation and indeed on my own behalf, register our deepest sorrow and regret on the untimely death of Mr. Elimane Kane, a dedicated servant of the ILO and in particular of Africa; his absence will be felt forever.

Mr. ZAKARIA (General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions) - Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with all those who congratulated you; for me, as a trade unionist, it is a great joy to see you at the presidency of this Conference - a former colleague and trade unionist. We are very proud of this fact and we are sure that under your presidency the Conference will be able to conduct its work in an admirable manner.

It is with great satisfaction that we welcome those parts of the Report of the Director-General submitted to this Seventh African Regional Conference which deal with issues that continue to be the focus of attention of workers and their trade unions. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that it does not contain information relating to the implementation of international labour standards in Africa, an aspect which is essential to give a comprehensive picture of the economic and social development on the continent and the main obstacle to such development. The World Federation of Trade Unions is convinced that one of these obstacles is the lack of democracy, the lack of respect for human and trade union rights, and thus the lack of real participation of the organised masses in development efforts. In a few days' time the whole world will observe the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; this is an occasion for us to insist on the implementation of all its provisions.

Since the last African Regional Conference held in 1983 in Tunis, the African continent has seen new challenges in the economic and social fields. Little progress has so far been made in economic and social development, as the Director-General pointed out in his opening remarks. The causes of this tragic situation - tragic not only for Africa, but for all developing countries - have been very well identified on several occasions. Principal among them are the unjust international economic order under which we live today, which is characterised by unfair and unequal economic relations between developed capitalist countries and developing countries, by the expansion of the harmful activities of transnational corporations and international institutions, the mismanagement of the economy, the absence of popular participation and the growing burden of external debt. On the subject of external debt, an African trade union conference was organised jointly by the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, the World Federation of Trade Unions and the Ethiopian Trade Union in the Ethiopian capital at the end of last year. After drawing attention to the fact that the debt-servicing burden is adversely affecting the development of African countries and the lives of their peoples, the conference pointed out that the solution of external debt problem, which will serve the interest of genuine development and the well-being of African societies as a whole, can only be attained through the unity of political action and a collective approach by all African countries. The conference particularly pointed to the dangerous consequences of the country-to-country or case-to-case approach to the problem. It felt that such an approach only seeks to strengthen the hand of the transnational banks and of those governments which act on their behalf. The conference demanded that Africa's external debt be cancelled, written off as grants by creditors or repudiated collectively. Any honest examination of Africa's external debt reveals doubt that the debt, or the major part of it, has been paid. Comparing the present debt claim against the actual outflow of resources, debt-servicing payments, inflated interest rates and, in some cases, undocumented debt, shows that the debt has been more than fully paid.

On many occasions the World Federation of Trade Unions has emphasised that the persistently critical economic situation of Africa poses a challenge to the whole international community. In the opinion of the World Federation of Trade Unions, peace, security, disarmament, political stability, economic and social progress are basic prerequisites for the successful and comprehensive development of the African continent. From a trade union point of view, the tasks arising from the relationship between disarmament and development and the implementation of the "disarmament for development" principle are of particularly topical importance to Africa.

The external economic environment of development is equally important for Africa's recovery and development. The position of the World Federation of Trade Unions is therefore one of active commitment to the democratisation of international trade, economic, monetary and financial relations.

We advocate a global and equitable solution to external indebtedness that would put as much emphasis on the interests of developing countries as on the need for a stable and harmonious evolution of the world economy.

Structural adjustments and externally based economic policies enforced by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other financial institutions, including the transnational corporations in African countries, have led in most cases to growing unemployment and poverty, as well as to restrictions in human and trade union rights when the people reacted against these policies.

Many jobs in the public service and in nationally owned enterprises have been lost without compensation elsewhere, owing to the lack of productive investments in other sectors.

A significant number of jobs might be created through public investment in rural areas, transport, health care, education and vocational training, ecology and other fields. Such highly labour-intensive investments, and the resulting salaries paid to more workers, would provide a wider market for locally produced goods and thus increase the income of peasants, craftsmen, co-operatives and small enterprises, with a beneficial cumulative effect on the whole economy.

Foreign and international aid and loans should be redirected towards investments which create jobs in sectors of particular importance to the self-reliant development of each country and the well-being of its people.

As long as apartheid exists, millions of workers and people in southern Africa will be unable to enjoy a normal life. Entire generations know nothing but war, oppression, exploitation and unemployment. Millions of people are denied the exercise of their human and trade union rights. It is especially women and children who are most affected by this situation. But facts and figures of the kind mentioned in the Director-General's Report only give us a rough idea of the great sufferings and the immense hardship of the people concerned.

The heroic struggle of the anti-apartheid forces within South Africa, and particularly that of trade unions, should be supported by all means. It has become quite clear now that some governments, although claiming to support the mandatory sanctions against South Africa, are actually obstructing these sanctions.

The fact is that these governments and their transnational corporations would be the first to be hurt by sanctions, and not Black people of South Africa, as they claim. In such a situation we feel that the international trade union movement has a big reserve which has not yet been fully utilised to advance the cause of sanctions. We feel that the programme of action which was elaborated by the international trade union movement should be put into effect. The World Federation of Trade Unions for its part once again declares its readiness to participate in any actions that can direct severe blows against the racist regime in Pretoria.

Will it be out of context if we propose that this Seventh Regional Conference of the ILO send a message on behalf of all its participants to the authorities of Pretoria asking for the immediate and unconditional release of Nelson Mandela? I am sure that I don't need to elaborate more on this. Some might think that this is contrary to the Rules of Procedure, but let us for once forget about these rules because this is a case on which everyone is united, and nobody can criticise us for making an effort to obtain the release of that great man.

Furthermore, the World Federation of Trade Unions suggests that the Regional Conference should support the proposal of the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Countries, held in Nicosia from 7 to 10 September, that a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa be convened in 1989, and that the ILO contribute actively to its preparation.

The World Federation of Trade Unions shares the opinion expressed in the Director-General's Report that women's work in Africa cannot be over-generalised as it takes many different forms.

The situation of women in Africa confirms the principal position of the World Federation of Trade Unions that the solution of existing problems cannot be found independently but must be seen in the context of the general political, economic and social situation of the respective countries.

At the same time it confirms that the urgent task of ensuring the equality of women remains essential to promote respect for basic human rights. It is not possible to achieve this equality without the increased participation of working women in solving today's political, economic and social problems.

In this context I would like to inform you that the Fifth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women, to be held in Sofia, in September 1989, will also take into consideration the situation of African women and will set priorities for trade union action in the future.

Referring to rural and urban training in Africa, we agree fully with the view contained in the Office's report, in the sense that the present educational system in Africa is not appropriate to the present needs of African countries; consequently, radical change in both the structure and the scope of the education system is required if it is to play a more effective role in helping to integrate more and more people into society.

In this respect the present system of education and training does not in any way contribute to overcoming the present difficult situation in the field of employment. Therefore, priority programmes for particular strata of the population should be elaborated and implemented, as for instance for young people who form a substantial part of the labour force.

Unfortunately, we have to say that the Report of the Director-General does not emphasise the role of trade unions.

In conclusion, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Government and the people of Zimbabwe for their hospitality and the wonderful conditions that they have created for the work of the Conference.

Special thanks and gratitude to the leaders, members and all the workers belonging to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions for surrounding us with care, fraternity and friendship.

(Mr. Mugalla takes the Chair.)

Mr. MAPURANGA (representative of the Organisation of African Unity) - The Seventh African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation is of vital importance, given some of the major objectives assigned to it as clearly enunciated in the Director-General's Report. The purpose of this Conference is not only to examine and evaluate the progress made by the ILO in its efforts to uplift the status of women in society, to provide man with training and gainful employment in both the rural and urban areas but also and above all to guarantee for man in southern Africa, in this subregion, the optimum conditions necessary for him to exercise his right to work in the face of the numerous - very numerous - obstacles and challenges imposed on him. I am here referring to the problem of apartheid, racial discrimination, all sorts of repression and deprivation, torture - in short, the repudiation of peace, liberty and the right to exist as currently practised by the Pretoria regime in South Africa and Namibia. These are some of the problems which concern the Organisation of African Unity.

Since one of the primary objectives enshrined in its Charter is the promotion of freedom, equality, justice and dignity, the OAU cannot afford to remain indifferent to this situation.

Quite fortunately this Conference is being held at a time when the entire international community has unanimously recognised that apartheid constitutes a crime against humanity and needs to be reformed - not to be reformed - but totally eradicated. This odious policy not only denies the peoples of southern Africa the exercise of their rights, their basic rights to freedom, independence, dignity and life, but also defies the entire international community, a very wide spectrum of which are Members of this Organisation, the ILO. In fact, what message will this Conference be able to send to the peoples of this region at this moment when some countries, mostly of the developed world, are opposed to the implementation of the present provisions passed by the 1981 and 1986 Paris conferences against apartheid? To maintain its credibility as the tripartite champion of human rights, this Organisation must transcend the limited horizons of verbal condemnations of apartheid and translate its past and present resolutions into a concrete and efficacious anti-apartheid programme, within the framework of the updated Declaration concerning Action against Apartheid in South Africa and Namibia.

We already have such a programme of action, endorsed by the General Conference of the ILO, and this Regional Conference must suggest the ways and means for its implementation.

Apart from apartheid, which constitutes the major obstacle to the establishment of peace and security, prerequisites for the enjoyment by the peoples of southern Africa of their inalienable rights, African countries are also faced with excruciating rural development problems. Rural development problems, the improvement of agricultural training, the training of farmers and peasants, as well as the retraining and further training of rural cadres, have been planned and executed in many African countries without tangible results.

We in the Organisation of African Unity are convinced that this issue must be seriously addressed in the course of our deliberations.

Most of the African governments are aware of the fact that vocational training of rural cadres should be supplemented by pedagogical training so as to ultimately convert these cadres into instructors, capable of rationally implementing individual rural development programmes and directing a greater proportion of job-seeking youth towards the agricultural sector.

Although the training may not always be employment-generating, it is generally accepted that an appropriate and solid vocational training helps to strengthen the adaptability and mobility of manpower, thus ensuring a reserve on the employment market and reducing the scarcity of specific skills.

Africa, least of all the OAU, is not unaware of the fact that trained manpower is of tremendous economic advantage for development. It is unfortunate, however, that there are still several countries in Africa whose rural training programmes are not always adapted to the developmental needs of the rural populations.

As for the urban sector, its limited capacity to solve the problem of unemployment has led to the expansion of the informal sector. It has been acknowledged that the informal sector is generally characterised by a low level or an absence of trained and qualified personnel. If that is the case, then this Conference is the appropriate forum to examine the causes and come up with recommendations for the attention of African States.

The OAU hails the action each African country is taking internally to improve vocational training which comprises particularly, measures aimed at facilitating formulation of national training policies and strategies which would help establish a method of co-ordination between its system of vocational training and manpower requirements.

However, the present mode of vocational training consists in adopting classical models of training which do not often take into account the experience acquired on the job.

The OAU wishes to call on your Conference to further reflect on the ways and means of fashioning vocational training systems which are more adapted to the facilities available to the rural populations. Besides, it should be recognised that the efforts deployed by African governments to cope with socio-economic development demands are often hampered by the inadequacy of qualified instructors. These cadres and instructors always lack sufficient practical experience or the required theoretical knowledge of the subjects they teach. In these conditions, I should like to call upon your Conference to help African countries develop effective methods of training in enterprises so as to increase the tempo of apprenticeship and promote close and beneficial co-operation between industry, trade and the training institutions. Your Conference should evolve mechanisms to support the efforts of African governments with an eye to improving the nature of training programmes and to better responding to the situation and the conditions of the local employment market.

It is common knowledge that a major factor that has dominated the political and economic life of African countries throughout the period between 1962 and 1970 has been the co-operative movement. This movement has been accepted as a dynamic instrument for mobilising employment and resources for development. However, its conception does not always take into account the realities in most of the African countries owing to insufficient financial and human resources necessary for its take-off and the absence of incentives and control measures. These factors have made the failure of this movement almost inevitable. However, African States are correct in their conviction that co-operatives should play a dominant role in the implementation of national development plans.

Awareness-building efforts have been planned in order to popularise the idea of co-operative movements in Africa and ensure its spread throughout the African agricultural sector in the rural world. Huge financial resources have been allotted for the promotion of co-operative movements. Consequently, African governments accord top priority to co-operatives, and for that purpose obtain credits from financial institutions and from States. These efforts have not always been successful, but this relative lack of initial success cannot and should not be held out as an indictment of the co-operative movement itself. We should take a critical stock of our experience in this domain, evolve better methods of making co-operatives a more efficacious instrument of development which involves our populations in the economic, administrative and social management of their communities. It is necessary to popularise the management decentralisation principle so as to encourage the direct involvement of the members of the rural community and heighten levels of productivity. In this connection, I have the privilege to seize this opportunity to inform your Conference that, pursuant to its programme of action, the OAU organised in Abuja, the future capital of Nigeria, a seminar on African workers' productivity from 25 to 30 July this year. For a week, experts and technicians from African ministries of labour and/or productivity, African universities and ministries of planning, reflected on the possibilities of helping all those involved in the development process to better grasp the importance of productivity and its relations with other technical and general labour and employment factors, as well as the micro- and macro-economic considerations that come into play in socio-economic development planning. The seminar made it possible for African researchers, planners, politicians, employers' and workers' organisations alike to acquaint themselves with the basic notions of productivity. It especially helped to stimulate the interest of member States of the Organisation of African Unity to formulate specific productivity policies so as to tackle social and labour issues. A full report on this seminar will be given to the OAU Labour Commission when it next meets in Bujumbura next year.

Mr. PANKOV (Observer, USSR) - Allow me, in my capacity as observer to this Conference, to extend, on behalf of the delegation of the USSR, our cordial greetings to all who are assembled here. May I also convey to the President our warm congratulations on his election to the high office of the presidency of the Seventh Session of the ILO African Regional Conference. We are confident that under his able guidance the Conference will prove to be a fruitful one.

Taking this opportunity, I would like also to express our sincere thanks to the Government and the people of the Republic of Zimbabwe for their hospitality and for the excellent organisation of the Conference. This ILO African Regional Conference represents a major step towards solving the most pressing problems of African nations' economic and social development. Its outcome will have a great impact on Africa's ability to overcome its critical economic and social situation, as mentioned in the Report presented by the Director-General of the International Labour Office to this Conference.

The Soviet Union is concerned about the continuing serious economic crisis in most African countries. Their efforts at national, sub-regional and regional levels are yet to yield desired results in terms of a drastic change in the critical economic situation. According to an ECA economic analysis, no major economic indicators have shown any noticeable improvement; indeed, some have shown a marked deterioration.

A number of unresolved external economic problems are standing in the way of sustained economic and social development, of which the most pressing is the foreign debt of developing African nations.

A fair settlement of the debt problem calls for a global and well-coordinated approach. The USSR is prepared to co-ordinate activity in solving these problems, together with all the countries and international organisations concerned.

However, solving the debt burden is only one aspect of a host of other social and economic problems. The Soviet Union has repeatedly said at ILO meetings and elsewhere, that when trying to restructure economic relations, attention should be focused on building a reliable economic security system and a new international economic order.

True to the principle of its foreign policy and the new political thinking, the Soviet Union builds its relations with African countries - as well as with the developing countries of other continents - on the basis of respect for sovereignty, independence, non-interference in internal affairs and equitable and mutually beneficial co-operation.

In 1987, the aggregate volume of Soviet economic assistance to the developing countries reached 11,700 million roubles. The Soviet Union has not stood by and failed to take urgent measures to overcome the critical food situation and eliminate consequences of natural disasters; it is giving help, including grants, to a number of African countries, in the form of supplies, food, building materials, medicines, motor vehicles and locust control means.

The United Nations Programme of Action notes that in order to ensure economic growth and solve social problems, it is vital for African countries that there should be effective development, planning and management of manpower resources, inter alia through the training of national skilled personnel. The Soviet Union regards assistance in this field as a key area of its co-operation with African countries. During the past two years, over 45,000 specialists and skilled workers from African countries have been trained with the assistance of the USSR, including nearly 22,000 during the course of building and other projects. At present, 24,000 African students are attending higher and secondary specialised educational establishments in the Soviet Union.

During the 1986-88 period, our country not only trained national personnel in the USSR but also provided assistance in setting up, expanding and reconstructing about 30 educational establishments in African countries.

Furthermore, annual seminars are held in the USSR for representatives of African developing countries on various subjects of socio-economic development, under the auspices of various international organisations of the United Nations system, including the ILO.

Taking into consideration the needs of developing countries, the Soviet Union gives particular attention to providing concessional economic assistance to these countries.

Peace and security on the continent are particularly important to ensure comprehensive economic and social development. In this connection, the policy pursued by the racist regime of South Africa, resulting in the critical economic situation in many African countries, causes special concern. It is only appropriate that this matter was given special attention in the speech of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Comrade Robert Mugabe, and by the Report of the ILO Director-General submitted to this Conference. The Report contains a profound analysis of the situation of South Africa and highlights the role and assistance by the ILO in solving this painful problem on the African continent.

We support the negotiating process to settle the situation of South-West Africa and hope it will bring about the normalisation of the situation in the area and the liberation of Namibia. This development will naturally have a favourable impact on the situation of the continent as a whole. It will also contribute to the attainment of social and economic development targets.

The Soviet Union firmly and steadfastly believes that apartheid must be totally eliminated as soon as possible; apartheid constitutes a crime against humanity and a threat to international peace and security and the Soviet Union strictly upholds decisions taken by the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council and the ILO to isolate the racist regime of South Africa at the international level. At the 75th Session of the International Labour Conference, held in June this year, the Soviet delegation fully supported the updated Declaration concerning Action against Apartheid in South Africa and Namibia and the Programme of Action against Apartheid. The implementation of the measures envisaged in these documents will enhance the ILO's contribution to the elimination of apartheid.

Reaffirming its solidarity with the front-line African States and the national liberation movements of Southern Africa in their struggle against colonialism and racism, the Soviet Union gives practical assistance to the AFRICA Fund which was established at the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1987. The Soviet contribution to the Fund stands at about \$100 million and is designated for financing specific projects. At present, 580 Soviet specialists work in the front-line States as a contribution to the Fund. Agreements have been reached with Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana on the secondment to these countries of an additional 730 specialists - physicians, station specialists in the fields of repair and maintenance of highways, bridges, port facilities, power-industry projects, etc.

The USSR does not view its co-operation and assistance to African countries as a one-time action. It bears witness to our consistent policy of solidarity with newly independent nations. Our country has rendered and will continue to render assistance to African countries in their economic and social development.

In conclusion, I would like, on behalf of the USSR delegation, to wish you - and through you all the delegations to the Seventh African Regional Conference of the ILO - a successful outcome to the Conference and the adoption of the final documents, which will make a considerable contribution to the solution of acute social and economic problems of African countries.

Interpretation from French: Mr. ZINSOU (Government delegate, Benin) - It is a great pleasure for me to join other speakers in paying tribute to the President for his election to the presidency of the Seventh Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation.

I should therefore like, on behalf of my Government and on behalf of the delegation I have the honour of leading to this Conference, to offer him my warmest congratulations, and I should also like to congratulate the other eminent officers of the Conference.

I am convinced that thanks to the President's inspired leadership the work of our meeting will be successful.

Allow me also to take this opportunity, on behalf of my country's Government and people, to express to Mr. Blanchard, the Director-General of the International Labour Office, all our gratitude for his continuous efforts on behalf of the least developed countries and more specifically the People's Republic of Benin, despite the financial crisis facing the ILO.

Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Blanchard on the excellent quality of the Report which has been submitted for our consideration and which faithfully reflects the concerns of the Consultative Committee that met in Yaoundé.

As you are well aware, the present Conference is being held at a very critical juncture in the history of our continent.

As our continent is troubled by social problems, weakened by the economic crisis, the development of Africa remains dependent on global and concerted action. For this reason the Regional Conference is the most appropriate framework for consideration, discussion and adoption of decisions necessary for our continent's survival.

In connection with Part I of the Director-General's Report, which deals with apartheid, I should like to point out that my country, Benin, its people and Government, are satisfied with and support the measures taken by the Organisation against the heinous system of apartheid with a view to wiping it from the face of this earth.

Here I would like to point out that at the present stage of our struggle, it would be useless for us to go on speaking about the problems raised by the concept of apartheid.

In my opinion, it seems that firm action and a genuine awareness are required in our States as part of a global strategy against the system of apartheid, this inhuman system that belittles our Black race.

Here, I am quite confident that the International Labour Organisation is playing and will always play a leading role in this field by reason of its tripartite structure, its worldwide membership and the resources available to it.

Despite the seriousness of the problems of work and employment and despite the attention these justifiably require, we must not forget the painful situation of our brethren in South Africa.

It is an inadmissible, intolerable situation that is a challenge to the conscience of Africa and the world at large.

I stress that this situation is all the more serious and dangerous for world peace as it is the nucleus of an unavoidable explosion, and the apartheid regime of South Africa will be solely responsible for this.

The system of apartheid is an obstacle to the development of our continent, and international action cannot be effective or bring hope to the victims unless it is concerted throughout the world in a spirit of solidarity.

Part II of the Report of the Director-General deals with women's work in Africa. While the value of the work they do is recognised, the importance attached to it is not commensurate with the essential role played by women in the economic development of our continent. The Report rightly points out the decline of women's role in production in Africa in recent years. Despite the many praiseworthy efforts of our governments much remains to be done for African women as regards emancipation and education or integration and equality. Here, my Government has been among those that have found that the redefinition of the status of women is a necessary condition for their redeployment, particularly in some parts of our continent. But apart from the weight of social and cultural tradition, illiteracy is a problem facing women and the African population as a whole. It is also worth noting that we are also facing the effects of drought and regional conflicts with their immediate consequences of rural exodus and migration. These phenomena have greatly contributed to unemployment of the inhabitants of these regions and more specifically that of women.

Recognising as I do the injustices suffered by women in the socio-economic sphere, it seems to me that African governments should do everything possible to promote not only the equality of opportunity and treatment for women but also to improve their integration in the national development process. Of course, to achieve this the necessary policies to combat illiteracy and to improve schooling and vocational training, especially for young African women, must be rethought and redefined. I am aware of the fact that the International Labour Organisation, through its technical co-operation activities, has always helped to spare Africa the scourges of illiteracy and ignorance. However, I hope that the Organisation will continue to help the communities suffering from indigence. The International Labour Organisation, as an organisation that represents the social conscience of the world, should take a fresh look at its methods of action and make its activities more concretely capable of dealing with the increasingly serious poverty in our States.

As far as training is concerned, it is quite obvious today that training systems are no longer able to meet the development needs of the continent. The school-age population in our countries has increased to a level where they are a disrupting factor in national development plans. As the Director-General has rightly pointed out, training has so far not been geared to rural areas where the majority of the African population live. But we must not forget that the problem of training is first and foremost a problem of development, and here I think that the Conference should answer the following questions.

How can training be made more practical and concrete in rural areas? What are the measures to be taken in the cities to prepare the children and adolescents of Africa for the society of tomorrow? These are the problems. Here we have to draw the attention of the Conference to the existence of an important factor, namely the population explosion in Africa. I consider that any training policy must undertake an in-depth study of the demographic problems of Africa.

Since the last Regional Conference in Tunis, many events have occurred on the African labour market. In Benin, the labour market is still characterised by a sharp rise in the number of university graduates, while at the same time we are witnessing lay-offs of workers in the private and semi-public sectors.

This situation was aggravated over the past few years by the economic crisis and recently by the conditions of application of programmes of structural adjustment recommended by the international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Every day that passes in our countries creates a situation of social unrest whose effects will be serious and unless unavoidable firm measures are taken to create job opportunities in Africa. Despite the efforts and the sacrifices made so far by our governments, we have not been able to match supply with demand on the labour market. And though it is true that in the opinion of international experts the rural areas must be a major contributor to the solution of employment problems, it is also important for us to know how best to create work opportunities there. This is why the system of co-operatives as an element of a global strategy for the development of employment opportunities in Africa seems to be an effective solution provided that it restores the confidence and meets the expectations of the millions of Africans who were disappointed by it in years gone by. I think that the problems of developing a new co-operative system should be analysed with reference to reality and to the wishes of the populations concerned, so as to enable the system to transcend the sociological constraints of its environment. It is necessary therefore for our Conference to define a new system of co-operatives and set limits to the intervention of those responsible for setting them up and promoting them.

Taking into account the various problems that have delayed the development of our continent, the international community must continue in its efforts to aid the development of our countries. The International Labour Organisation, as an instrument of international co-operation, must also pursue its efforts, taking into consideration the demands of the least developed countries through the establishment of a new view of development based on international solidarity.

These are the suggestions which might be worth your consideration and which I wish to submit to you at the present juncture. It goes without saying that the economic and social progress of mankind, the genuine improvement of living and working conditions for workers in Africa, as well as dynamic international co-operation, can only be undertaken if the peoples of the world live in peace, security and understanding.

Finally, allow me to reiterate my congratulations to the President and to the officers of the Conference on the exemplary manner in which the work of this Conference is being conducted. I should also like to thank the authorities of the host country most warmly for their hospitable reception.

Interpretation from French: Mr. KARIKURUBU (Government delegate, Burundi) - Allow me to join the preceding illustrious speakers at this Seventh African Regional Conference of the ILO in greeting the distinguished delegates, and through them, the peoples they represent at this eminent assembly. On behalf of my Government, my delegation and on my own behalf, it is a pleasure for me to congratulate the President of this Conference on his election and to assure him of our fervent and constant support during the discussions.

I take this opportunity to thank the Government and people of Zimbabwe, under the wise and typically African leadership of His Excellency, President Mugabe, for all that has been done to ensure the success of this Conference. I think we are off to a good start.

Before I discuss the current political and social situation in my country, allow me to hail the happy initiative taken by the Governing Body, which, at its 235th Session held in March 1987, wisely chose the items on our agenda. I would like to express our solidarity for the efforts of the ILO, as described in the Director-General's Report, concerning apartheid and the measures that have been taken with a view to participating in settling this question.

The items concerning the role of women in social and economic development as a source of income, rural and urban training, as well as the interest of African countries in the organisation of co-operatives, are also important topics.

The questions we are discussing at this meeting feature prominently on the agenda of the Government of the Third Republic of Burundi; aware of their importance, the Government has already undertaken a thorough analysis with a view to finding the right solution to these questions.

As regards apartheid, the Government of the Third Republic of Burundi has always abided by the cardinal principles of its foreign policy, especially the support of the liberation movements. At all meetings and in all fora, we have always denounced the inhuman practices to which the South African people are subjected on a day-to-day basis, and which are a blot on mankind.

We vehemently condemn once more the racist and discriminatory acts of the Pretoria regime which flagrantly violates the fundamental right of the people; we would like to make a vibrant appeal for Pretoria to accept the egalitarian dialogue which is being recommended by all peaceful and freedom-loving countries.

We would also invite the Pretoria regime to perceive the imperative need of respecting and implementing without delay Resolution 435 of the Security Council regarding independence for Namibia. As far as Burundi is concerned, we remain fervently convinced that the independence of Namibia cannot be predicated upon any condition running counter to the heartfelt aspirations for self-determination, as demanded by SWAPO, the sole and authentic representative of the people of Namibia.

The Republic of Burundi would also like to express its heartfelt solidarity with all the front-line States, under the recent leadership of His Excellency, Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, who during his term of office, and at a great cost, has provided all the support necessary for the people that have been oppressed, exploited and despoiled by the racist regime of South Africa.

As regards the participation of women in socio-economic activity, allow me to recall that Burundi is a law-abiding country, where equality before the law is the driving force for consolidation of social justice and the guarantee of national unity.

We would like to recall that regarding employment, our system advocates equal opportunity for all, without discrimination, in respect of access to employment, education and training.

Equal pay is also guaranteed, and our legislation provides for the protection of maternity. We would also like to point out that women are represented in tripartite bodies in the public service, the Party and its mass movements; we thereby ensure the implementation of all legal provisions for the benefit of all citizens.

With a view to strengthening their contribution to the economic development of the country, the Government of the Third Republic of Burundi has provided Burundi women with a framework for the full development of their potential. This responsibility has been assigned to the Ministry of Family and Women's Affairs, which is in charge of formulating government policy for the promotion of women and monitoring its impact on the family.

The specific objectives of this government body include the adoption of economic measures that will improve the living standards of the family; the implementation of an information and training programme relating to the needs expressed by women, especially in the area of their daily activities; a campaign to raise awareness concerning the occupational and household responsibilities of women, to encourage their interest in family planning programmes; and the promotion of women's special role in the raising of children, especially to preserve our traditional values, which are increasingly being compromised.

Finally, we wish to enable Burundi women to play fully their roles in preventing disease and strengthening cultural and artistic activities with a view to changing the mentality concerning the role of the social partners.

Regarding co-operatives, the policy adopted by our Government fits into current programmes for rural development that should lead to projects involving the effective participation of beneficiary populations, and are designed to promote self-management.

The efforts of the Government of the Third Republic of Burundi aim at a better supervisory organisation of co-operatives by emphasising specifically the role of co-operatives in production, credit and savings.

When it comes to training, the traditional education system promoted by previous policies has not managed to extend training to all segments of our population, thus preventing us from eradicating illiteracy and ignorance.

The few public and private initiatives taken in the area of vocational training with a view to meeting the demand for skilled labour have often been hampered by a lack of co-ordination, planning and coherent standards for vocational training.

To remedy this situation, which makes it difficult to adapt training to jobs, we have entrusted the Minister of Labour with the task of designing and establishing a coherent policy for vocational training, marrying discipline and flexibility with a view to ensuring supervision, co-ordination and promotion of this sector.

I fully recognise the priority and the importance of the issues that are on the agenda of this Conference; may the results of our discussions guide Africa towards its socio-economic development. It is true, and there is no doubt about this, that we face many obstacles; but our commitment, determination and concerted action can help us to overcome these obstacles.

We have no time to waste because there is much work to do. Allow me to refer, by way of example, to the provisional agenda of the Twelfth Regular Session of the OAU Labour Commission, to be held very soon in my country, from 29 March to 4 April 1989, in Bujumbura.

All such meetings among sisterly countries and friendly bodies which have opted for peace and progress as their ideals, strengthen our unity and our South-South co-operation.

It is in this spirit of openness to reality, truth and honesty that the Government of Burundi will be happy to host the Twelfth Regular Session of the OAU Labour Commission. We are already counting on your massive participation; there is no doubt that your presence will be eloquent testimony to the age-old solidarity of African people in their constant quest for a better future.

May I now point out that the measures taken by my country with regard to the points on our agenda are part of the blueprint for our society, devised by the Third Republic of Burundi, as from 3 September 1987.

The Government of the Third Republic of Burundi bases all its efforts on the cardinal principles of national unity, dialogue and concertation, collegial management and honesty so as to ensure equity, social justice and democracy at all levels of our national structure.

It is within this framework that the question of national unity is freely and widely discussed in party meetings in the administration, and during the visits of the Head of State and other authorities to the provinces, communes and the countryside. This approach has recently led the Military Committee for the National Well-being to appoint a national board to carry out a serious discussion on ways and means of consolidating the unity of the Burundi people.

Regarding social and economic affairs, the Third Republic has given pride of place to the rural sector, which accounts for about 90 per cent of our people. The Fifth Five-Year Development Plan gives priority to the Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development and Handicrafts. Constant efforts are being made to develop social infrastructures to enhance the living conditions of the people.

The recommendations of the Government concerning a better organisation of the labour market have been followed up by measures to liberalise employment by making it more flexible.

These measures and policies have not pleased everybody, especially the divisionists who advocate violence as a way of solving our problems. It is they who have caused the unhappy events of August.

Fairy-tale versions have been propagated throughout the world by the media, but my Government has sought to set the record straight, and made enormous efforts to restore peace.

Once order was restored, the Government immediately took large-scale measures in the two affected communities to ensure a lasting peace. Those who had left were urged to return, since their lives were no longer in danger. This appeal was heeded and I can assure you that as I am speaking the refugees are returning home freely and in great numbers every day.

In spite of these problems, I can assure you that the political life in our country has returned to normal, and that there is even greater determination to implement the socio-economic programmes of the Third Republic.

Although the aim of these trouble-makers was to undermine our Government's social programme, the Government and all the people of Burundi are determined to proceed courageously.

In conclusion, it is in this spirit that we join in with the collective will of all countries that are committed to fighting war, terrorism, hunger, sickness, misery and ignorance, with a view to promoting a peaceful world, a world of justice and security.

Long live African unity!

Long live international solidarity!

Mr. MASHASI (Workers' delegate, United Republic of Tanzania) - I would like first of all to join the previous speakers who have congratulated Mr. Nkomo on his election to the presidency of this Conference. Some of us who have had an opportunity to work with him and appreciate his qualities at the last International Labour Conference, where he was the Chairman of the Committee on Apartheid, are absolutely sure that he will steer our Conference to success. I also extend my congratulations to you, Mr. Mugalla, and to your colleagues on your election as Vice-Presidents and wish you a successful term of office.

Permit me to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of my union, JUWATA, and on my own behalf, our heartfelt sorrow at the untimely death of another son of Africa, Elimane Kane, Deputy Director-General, who was a senior ambassador of Africa in the International Labour Office.

The Report of the Director-General to this Seventh African Regional Conference has addressed itself to appropriate issues, in consideration of the economic and social conditions obtaining in our continent.

As they emerged from colonial domination and set out on the road to development, the African countries very soon found themselves in a serious world recession, from which they have suffered more than any other continent.

The countries that embarked on industrialisation, which is the only way to modern economic and social development, and were reliant on the production of primary products for export earnings with which to import raw materials, especially chemicals, spare parts and other capital and consumer goods, got caught up in a vicious circle. The prices of those products, most of which can only be obtained from the industrialised countries, have risen much faster than the prices of the primary products of our countries. The ability of our countries to satisfy the needs of our industries, let alone that of the social infrastructure, has been diminishing. The primary goods-producing sector, mainly the agricultural sector, has had difficulty in obtaining inputs and providing the necessary facilities for farmers and peasants.

The foreign exchange earning capacity of my country, the United Republic of Tanzania, can currently only provide for one-third of the country's basic needs. This situation entangles my country in a serious balance-of-payment problem, which it is supposed to be able to relieve through agreement with the International Monetary Fund. But the conditions imposed by the IMF are universally known to be a killing cure, especially as they are applied to developing countries. We shall seek to learn from the experience of other member States of the International Labour Organisation in order to adapt to or survive the cure. Our industries are operating at between 20 and 30 per cent of their utilisation capacity.

In a situation where industries are operating at such a low level of their utilisation capacity and suffering from sharp cuts in government expenditure as a result of our structural adjustment programme, the modern sector does not have the capacity to absorb more workers. If anything, the trend is towards retrenchment and redundancy, in other words an employment crisis.

It is against this background that I believe that a debate on employment creation deserves top priority on the agenda today.

The reports of the Director-General direct our attention to four areas: rural and urban training in Africa, co-operatives (both of which are of crucial significance for employment creation), the notorious problem of apartheid in South Africa, and, of course, the question of women's work. The reports are informative and instructive and quite properly highlight the need for training, especially of school-leavers, women and members of the informal sector.

Training, especially for self-employment in a situation where employment in the modern sector is declining, can be highly productive if properly balanced with other factors. Training people in modern agriculture, for instance, may be a waste of time if they have no guarantee of getting modern agricultural equipment, because the trainee will in any case be obliged to use a hoe and therefore remain a peasant.

The programme of training for self-employment must ensure not only that a market exists for the products of the skills for which people are trained but also that the financial institutions, especially the commercial banking system, provide the trainees with the necessary capital for an optimal utilisation of their skills.

I appreciate the importance attached to training by the International Labour Office. However, there is a glaring contradiction between the stance of the ILO in the report before us and that taken by the International Monetary Fund which obliges States to cut down expenditure on education. The Director-General may wish to tell us how the proposal contained in his report can be reconciled with the structural adjustments insisted upon by the IMF.

The Director-General also draws our attention to the importance of the co-operative movement in development. His report underlines the role trade unions have to play in promoting the co-operative movement and highlights the contribution that has been made in this respect by some unions in Africa.

My union, JUWATA, has a full-fledged department of co-operatives and workers' participation through which it has for a number of years mobilised workers into co-operative unions ranging from credit unions and consumer co-operative unions to producers' co-operative unions.

The only snag is that, because of the legal set-up in my country, these co-operative unions once established do not maintain any organic link with JUWATA, they are autonomous operating under a different set of laws and identifying themselves with the family of co-operative unions. They soon forget that they came into existence through the efforts of the trade union organisation. We do not regret that. We are always proud when we see a co-operative union that was formed through our initiative or support growing from strength to strength. However, we become disheartened when we witness a co-operative organisation weakening without the trade union movement being able to intervene because, from the legal standpoint, the weakening of a co-operative union is a matter for the members of the co-operative union alone. Only the Co-operative Department of the Government can intervene, if need be.

JUWATA will seek to learn more about the mobilisation of workers and members of the informal sector into co-operative unions.

I wish to conclude my intervention by expressing our condemnation of the South African apartheid regime which continues to ignore the call by the international community to abandon the abominable and oppressive system of apartheid. We are witnessing a worsening situation in South Africa where oppression is growing not only against trade unionists but against the entire population, including young children in so far as they are perceived as resisting racial discrimination.

JUWATA will continue to collaborate with the Government and people of Tanzania in support of the struggling people of South Africa and Namibia until victory is attained.

Mr. MKWANAZI (representative of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania).- The Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania has the honour to add its voice to the congratulations on Comrade Nkomo's election as President of this Conference. We in the liberation movements were fighting alongside him only yesterday and we have no doubt that he will steer the deliberations of this august gathering in a revolutionary manner. On behalf of my delegation, I should also like to thank the ILO for inviting us to participate in this august gathering of dedicated men and women deliberating on pertinent issues affecting Africa in general and southern Africa in particular.

It is my privilege, on behalf of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania, to announce officially to this important Conference the release from imprisonment of the President of the PAC, Comrade Zephania Mothopeng. He was released by the racist regime last week after 12 years' imprisonment. Uncle Zeph, as the youth of our motherland formally and in reverence refer to him, has dedicated his life to the national liberation of his people.

In the 1950s he was the leader of the Transvaal African Teachers who boycotted the teaching of Bantu education, for which he was expelled and banned - along with his wife. Uncle Zeph, as an executive member of the PAC, was involved in the first PAC positive campaign against the South African racist regime. This led to the shootings at Sharpeville, Kwalanga and Durban in 1960 and finally slammed the door of peaceful resistance in that country; hence, the armed struggle was launched. After that, Comrade Mothopeng was banished; he was subsequently re-arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Upon his release, being an indomitable character, Uncle Zeph continued to work among the youth of Azania. He trekked the whole country speaking to the youth and reorganising the youth of our country; these activities led up to the historic national students' uprising on 16 June 1976, known as the Soweto Uprising. Comrade Zeph and 17 others were put on trial under the first secret political trial in South Africa known as the Bethal 18 trial. Four of those who were supposed to stand trial with him were tortured to death by the racist regime and at the end of the bogus trial, the racist Judge Curlewis concluded that Comrade Zephania Mothopeng had "plotted, predicted and orchestrated the 16 June 1976 students' uprisings" and the indefatigable revolutionary Uncle Zeph was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

We, of the PAC, have no praise for the racist regime for such action. One thing that is sure is that Zephania Mothopeng is now a very sick man. The racist regime is perhaps merely giving him to us for burial. This is what happened in the past with the late first President of the PAC, Mangaliso Sobukwe. He also died of "cancer" - the same disease we are told is responsible for Uncle Zeph's deteriorating health.

We have also been informed that our brother of the ANC, Nelson Mandela, is suffering from "tuberculosis".

In his first press conference, Uncle Zeph welcomed his unconditional release; he had earlier refused to be released on the condition that he denounced violence. He saw as his first task to unite the African people against the unlawful White settler regime. He said, although he welcomed his release, that he would love to see prominent PAC member Jeff Masemula - the longest serving political prisoner in

Azania - and Nelson Mandela out of gaol. He said: "I do not believe there is any justification for keeping them in gaol. I am naming these two as symbols of all other prisoners of conscience who should be out here and working for the return of our usurped land. They should be released not on the grounds of compassion or mercy, but because they are held illegally and illegitimately by an illegal regime." He challenged the racist State President, P.W. Botha, to lift the ban on the PAC and all other political movements. Comrade Mothopeng has cautioned the international community not to be fooled by cosmetic changes said to be taking place in occupied Azania. He urged continued cultural and economic boycotts of South Africa until the regime has been toppled. He concluded by saying that: "The only item we are prepared to negotiate is the return of the land and the wealth to its rightful owners". The PAC wishes to thank the ILO and the workers of the world for their unceasing demand for the release of Zephania Mothopeng and other political prisoners.

We know that on several occasions, at sessions of the International Labour Conference, there has always been a resolution demanding for the release of political prisoners. We appeal to this august body to continue making this appeal until Jeff Masemula, Nelson Mandela and others have been unconditionally released.

Allow me to refer to the Director-General's Report which we appreciate very much; however, before doing that, I wish to express the PAC's appreciation for the co-operation that exists between us and the ILO. The ILO Dar es Salaam office, under my brother John Seal, is very helpful to us especially in the field of management training, which we need very much. We trust that other ILO offices in other parts of Africa will assist us in the same way.

On the political front, the racist regime has been doing no more than buying time and creating different structures to tighten the oppression and the exploitation of the majority of the African population. As it has been said, the country is virtually under military occupation. The state of emergency still exists but, in spite of this, our people are still fighting. We of the PAC hold the view that the vehicle for genuine change can never be the secular regime but rather the dispossessed and the oppressed majority. We encourage all forms of struggle - the way to armed struggle being the principal form of struggle. We continue to demand the idolation of the racist regime and wish to reiterate the call for the imposition of comprehensive mandatory economic sanctions.

We make no apology about this constituency of the oppressed African people. Yes, we stand for democracy. We guarantee no group's or minority group's rights. We guarantee individual rights. The PAC politically stands for the government of the Africans for the Africans by the Africans, with everyone who owes his or her only loyalty to Azania and Africa as an African. May I also add that it is a historically known fact that when the first White trade union in the mining industry was formed during the eighteenth century, its objective was not to protect its members from management but to keep African workers out of certain job categories. A racist trade unionist, Aric Paulos, is on record as saying that Africans will not perform those duties he regards as White duties. This racist is now a Member of Parliament in that country in order to enhance the position of the White workers at the top.

In the economic situation in that country the situation is precarious, especially for the African people. Fortunately, the two greatest federations, COSATU and NACTU, have done their best to put pressure on the regime and we continue to appeal to the ILO to assist them in their fight against the regime.

In conclusion, I would like to hope that this Conference reaches decisions that will demand the overthrow of that regime by all means.

Interpretation from French: Mr. MAYILA (Minister of Labour, Employment, Human Resources and Vocational Training, Gabon) - Allow me, first of all, to express to the President and other members of the bureau our heartfelt congratulations on their election to steer the work of this Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Zimbabwe and the President of the Republic, Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, for having so willingly accepted to host in his country during the same year two conferences of vital importance for the future of our continent.

Last May, the Tripartite Conference on Action against Apartheid was held here in Harare. As everybody knows, it undertook an immense task, namely the updating of the 1981 Declaration concerning the Policy of Apartheid in South Africa. This bears witness to the faith that officials in this country continue to show in co-operation between the member countries of our region.

Given the items on the agenda of this Seventh African Regional Conference and the particularly difficult conditions Africa has had to face over the past few years, this meeting will stand out as a landmark in our history. Africa, in fact, is undergoing a period of disasters: natural disasters due to drought, famine, plagues of locusts and even floods; economic disasters due to world recession, the burden of our foreign debt, the slump in the price of our export commodities and the measures of structural adjustment which have been dictated to us by the international financing institutions. There is another disaster facing us; namely the population explosion which, according to the latest predictions, indicate that by the year 2010 Africa will have 1,000 million inhabitants.

As a result of all these disasters, the social situation in Africa is dramatic. It is characterised by: a massive rural exodus, accompanied by semi-endemic problems of urban unemployment and underemployment; increased impoverishment of our rural areas; uncontrolled migrations of populations from one country to another; and a population of refugees whose needs the host countries are quite often unable to meet, despite international aid, as these countries often have their own internal problems. Aware of this situation throughout the continent, our Conference provides us today with an opportunity to adopt together measures that will remedy if not cure these ills that are threatening our collective social peace.

I am personally convinced - at least this is the will and desire of my Government - that the pertinent nature of the recommendations we shall be adopting on rural and urban training in Africa and co-operatives will serve as guide-lines to help our governments in their efforts to solve our social problems.

Turning to the Director-General's Report, allow me to join the other speakers who have preceded me on this rostrum to congratulate him most warmly on his excellent work. The topical nature of the questions submitted to us for discussion and the style and depth of the considerations in the document bear witness once again to the Director-General's steadfastness and lucidity.

Before I go any further, I would like to undertake a rather sad duty; namely to express the sorrow felt by my country's Government upon learning of the sudden death of Mr. Elimane Kane, Deputy Director-General of the ILO, an eminent citizen of our continent.

I would also like to offer my profound sympathy to the Director-General and assure him that the Government of Gabon will always treasure the memory of the deceased.

As far as the Report is concerned, I wish I could find the right words to describe what I feel about apartheid; the position of my country on this matter is well known. We cannot search for life in a place where life is snuffed out daily and where apartheid kills. The Government and the people of Gabon condemn every form of discrimination. The people of Gabon, under the leadership of President Omar Bongo, have chosen the path of democracy.

Apartheid, that is to say the oppression by a minority which claims to be superior to a Black majority in South Africa, has always been condemned by Gabon and will continue to be so as long as the entire population of that country is not given the identity of a nation and a single and indivisible government of the people, of and for the people.

Apart from making statements, Gabon has always contributed to the international action to put an end to this scourge; this has either taken the form of collective action, within the Organisation for African Unity or individual action in accordance with the Declaration concerning Action against Apartheid in South Africa and Namibia, adopted by the International Labour Conference.

At this juncture, Gabon would like to congratulate and encourage the trade unions and workers in South Africa in their daily struggle to obtain fair and equal working conditions, the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work and their full rights as workers - in accordance with international labour standards.

Women's work in Africa represents the second item on our agenda in this Conference. This is a subject which we have great pride in bringing up because we are aware of the fact and convinced that women must play a major role in our society; as Lenin said, there is not and will not be any freedom as long as women do not enjoy the same freedom and privileges as men under the law.

The extent to which women may contribute to society hinges essentially on what it provides them in the way of basic rights, such as the right to education, the right to training, the right to social integration and promotion of their interests.

In other words, the condition of women is a measure of the development of any State.

Thus, women throughout the world, and rightly so, are claiming that their voice must be heard and their aspirations taken into account when vital national decisions are taken. Women wish to feel that society appreciates their work and their skills and that their experience is needed in various fields.

As far as Gabon is concerned, President Bongo was the first to encourage the establishment of structures encouraging the integration of Gabonese women in the development process.

Within the Government, we have created a ministerial department in charge of the promotion of women, which is headed by a woman. This bears witness to our concern to establish both structures and organisations within which women may freely express their needs and find solutions best suited to meet these needs.

At the higher political level in our country, we have established a unit known as the "Union of Women of the Democratic Party of Gabon", which plays a vital role in our popular movement. It is responsible for the political, moral, cultural and intellectual education of women in my country.

Furthermore, the Gabonese Association of African Women (AGFA) is open to all women who are heads of enterprises, owners of commercial establishments or who exercise a liberal profession. In addition to all these organisational structures, women's activities extend into the informal sector. Indeed, women are very active in small-scale trade and commerce in the various local markets, both in rural and urban areas.

In rural areas, there are literacy courses and education courses given in the shape of meetings and informal chats. The establishment of women's homes and agricultural co-operatives throughout Gabon all bear witness to the steps taken to encourage the full development of Gabonese women.

Quite often, when speaking of women's work, one omits to refer to the moral tasks they assume - the work they undertake in addition to any paid work; in other words, the education of children.

Women therefore have an enormous responsibility in bringing up future citizens so that they respect their own people, state property, culture and peoples from other nations.

It is with this in mind that the Gabonese Government has decided to take in hand the education of young people of both sexes - at all levels of schooling and vocational training - both in rural and urban areas. In fact, there is 100 per cent school attendance in Gabon - a record of which we can be proud.

A poet in my country has said, and I quote: "When I speak of myself, I speak of you."

Therefore, when I give you an account of what is happening in my country, I am not overlooking the fact that despite its differences, Africa is one and the same; it has the same aspirations and difficulties. Social progress is a dynamic notion and the condition of African women, which is one of the main discussion points today, is an example of this.

From the Director-General's Report and the statements we have heard, we may conclude that very encouraging steps are being taken by all our countries - but the means available for the achievement of these various methods are so limited that they delay any progress. We must therefore be realistic and bear in mind that changes in the mentality of a nation occur slowly and that results cannot always be expected after only 30 years of independence.

Therefore, we must admit that much remains to be done.

The Government of Gabon highly appreciates the achievements of the International Labour Office in its efforts to combat discrimination and social inequality through its international standards and technical co-operation programmes.

Gabon has ratified most of the Conventions dealing with basic human rights, especially the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, No. 11 (1921), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, No. 87 (1948) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111 (1958). We have also ratified a certain number of other Conventions related to the work of women.

We have also adopted the necessary legislation in accordance with the standards of the ILO; indeed, it even goes further than these standards in some respects.

Furthermore, we have established the necessary administrative authorities to supervise the application of these Conventions; we are nevertheless still convinced that specific action is more advantageous than the very best laws.

We have therefore set up the necessary legal framework and administrative structures for our country. So what do we still need?

What we need are men and women - trained officials - who can travel throughout the country and visit all our urban and rural centres to increase public awareness, educate our populations and popularise methods of marketing, stocking, conserving, managing and marketing the various products. We also need men and women to teach people how to improve their working and living conditions.

In concluding, it only remains for me to call upon the International Labour Office and its Director-General to listen even more attentively to requests made by our respective governments to step up technical co-operation, even though it has already achieved so much.

Mr. AHMED (Government delegate, Somalia) - On behalf of the Somali delegation and on my own behalf, I should like to congratulate the President on his well deserved election to guide the deliberations of the Seventh African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation. I am very confident that with his wide experience and wisdom the conclusion of our Conference will be crowned with distinction and success.

My good wishes and congratulations go also to the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Blanchard, for his valuable contribution to the preparation of the Conference Report, which is presently under discussion.

Coming to the items covered by the Report of the Director-General pertaining to the problem of apartheid practised by the racist regime of Pretoria and the situation of women in Africa, my Government has continued to speak out resolutely against the apartheid regime in South Africa and has continued to abide strictly by all the resolutions, decisions and recommendations of the United Nations and its specialised agencies, including the International Labour Organisation.

As South Africa is intensifying apartheid, aggression, destabilisation and state terrorism against neighbouring States and constantly increasing its military potential, my Government strongly recommends the adoption of further decisions and sanctions against South Africa. It also fully supports the decisions taken by the international organisations to bring about the immediate termination of the occupation of Namibia by South Africa and the unconditional transfer of all authority to the people of Namibia.

Furthermore, my Government strongly condemns the policy of apartheid adopted by South Africa, which represents a unique system of institutionalised racism, and advocates strict and rigorous implementation of the mandatory sanctions adopted by the Security Council. Such sanctions are the most effective means available to the international community to force the so-called South African Government by peaceful means to make the necessary changes leading to the total eradication of apartheid. It is therefore the onus for the international community as a whole to resume its responsibility and exert all necessary pressure on South Africa as per the procedure prescribed in the Charter. A decision by the Security Council on sanctions would no doubt be a clear signal to the South African Government that the international community at large is bent upon proceeding to concrete action.

We strongly feel that the Organisation as a whole should perform its task of telling the South African Government of our serious concern at its failure to take any appropriate measures to abolish apartheid or do anything about the resultant deterioration in the situation. We further stress that the state of seige should be discontinued, that Mr. Mandela and other political prisoners should be released unconditionally from detention, that forced resettlement to be stopped and that discriminatory legislation be done away with once and for all for the betterment of mankind. We emphatically oppose bringing opponents of apartheid to trial.

Somalia upholds the resolutions and recommendations of international organisations and conferences aimed at combating colonialism, racism and apartheid. It believes that peace in the region can be guaranteed only by the complete abolition of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial and democratic society in South Africa.

In recognition of the contribution that Somali women have made in the economical, political and social sectors of society, the Government founded in 1977 the Somali Women's Democratic Organisation (SWDO). Its mandate is to propose, promote and initiate progressive policies and programmes for the advancement of Somali women.

Regarding the health sector, a landmark in the health policies of the community was the Government's commitment to primary health care. The aim of this policy is to fulfil the need for a more equitable distribution of health-related resources among the people, with special emphasis on women. Nevertheless, problems still exist in the distribution of health resources in rural and nomadic areas.

Positive policies in the education sector are leading to the eradication of illiteracy, to an increase in girls' enrolment in all levels of the school system and, to a certain extent, to a change of attitude towards the education of women. However, most of the gains in this respect have been won by the urban population.

Somali women have equal rights and opportunities with men in all aspects of social, economic and political life. The Constitution of the Somali Democratic Republic gives equal rights and duties to all citizens, regardless of their sex. Women can elect and be elected, thus manifesting their political opinion.

The Government, recognising the equality of men and women in all spheres of life, has promulgated the Family Act whereby women are given equal rights and status with men in marriage, divorce and inheritance. I must stress here that, according to the recent census undertaken by the Government, Somali women constitute about 25 per cent of the total working force.

In the economic sector, women in Somalia have traditionally contributed greatly in livestock raising, agriculture and trade. They occupy an important place in society. They are normally engaged in various sector of the economy. They do major work in rural areas and in urban settlements.

Rural and urban development training is a top priority of the Somali Government's development policy.

Rural development is based on the realisation that the bulk of the country's natural and human resources are of a rural nature and any sound development and planning policy must take that into account. In the urban sector the policy has been geared towards developing facilities for technical education and vocational training so as to reduce the critical shortage of skilled manpower.

Rural training includes a variety of skills, among them daily life skills, income-generating skills, skills related to the provisions of basic community services and facilities, occupational skills, non-vocational skills such as leadership participation in rural institutions and functional literacy skills. It has the seeds of change and progress in it without, of course, leading to the alienation of the rural people from their environment and productive way of life. This provides the rural community with skills which enable individuals to improve their productive capacity, enhance their living standards and achieve a degree of equality.

In the urban sector a variety of institutions conduct training programmes in Somalia. They deal with a definite problem and cater to specific groups in the nation-building process.

Currently, the Department of Training in the Ministry of Labour, Sports and Social Affairs operates only one vocational training centre in Mogadishu and a new centre is under construction in Hargeisa. Other centres are operated by various organs of the State which also contribute to the development of skilled labour.

The Government, realising that the socio-economic development of the country can be achieved only through co-operatives enacted by Law No. 40 on 4 October 1973 covering various sectors of the economy, including agriculture, fisheries, livestock, crafts, docks, pharmacies and private transport. These sectors are run on a co-operative basis as an important vehicle for promoting rural development. The basic idea has been to organise workers into more efficient units in which the means of production or earnings are commonly owned by all concerned.

In January 1978 the administration monitoring the progress made by the various co-operatives in their respective fields took the bold step of creating the Somali Co-operative Movement Organisation to consolidate and pool resources in order to maintain income levels and to develop the country's various economic sectors.

We hope that the Seventh African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation will arrive at conclusions that will be of benefit to us all in the region and that the ILO will be endowed with greater resources to continue its noble task and activities.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Government of Zimbabwe for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to us.

Mr. KAIEMBO (representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) - On behalf of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, representing over 87 million workers world-wide, I should like to extend warm fraternal greetings to this Conference. The choice of Zimbabwe as the venue of this Conference gives us a unique opportunity to convey to the majority of the people of South Africa a true message of solidarity, and to the minority regime a loud and clear message that apartheid must end. And it will end.

Just prior to this Conference, the ICFTU held a meeting of a special Co-ordinating Committee on South Africa, bringing together major ICFTU affiliates from Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa, the international trade secretariats, as well as representatives of the independent Black trade union movement inside South Africa and the Southern Africa Trade Union Co-ordination Council (SATUCC). The aim of the Co-ordinating Committee is to maximise political as well as material support for the majority workers of South Africa and Namibia in their struggle for human and trade union rights, and for the SADCC countries in their efforts to promote the total economic, political and social emancipation of the subregion from South Africa's aggression and destabilisation.

Our job is to convey at every opportunity the message we have received from our brothers and sisters inside South Africa and Namibia, and to mobilise our members the world over for an appropriate international response. This message is - and I quote: "Don't be taken in by any bogus signals from the Pretoria regime. The situation is getting worse, not better."

The restrictions imposed on COSATU in February remain. The 17 anti-apartheid organisations banned at the time remain banned, and new bans are being issued. The legal space for democratic opposition has virtually been closed. Prior to the so-called elections that took place in October, over 270 people were reported to have been detained; 200 of these were trade unionists.

This year also saw an unprecedented onslaught on the independent Black trade union movement. In spite of massive protests both inside and outside South Africa, the regime promulgated the Labour Relations Amendment Act which is intended to weaken, if not altogether destroy trade union structures.

The conference of anti-apartheid groups called by COSATU in September, which among other things was to plan protest action against the Act, was banned at the eleventh hour, followed by numerous arrests, detentions and restrictions.

Since the promulgation of the Act, employer attitudes in South Africa have noticeably hardened. Over the last couple of months the police has been called in to deal with worker disputes on more than ten occasions. The onslaught on the independent Black trade union movement is multidimensional. Throughout this year there has been a widespread smear campaign against trade unionists, basically aimed at discrediting their unions and their leadership in the eyes of the workers and endeavouring to promote disunity between COSATU and NACTU within the national centres or within individual unions. The campaign is also aimed at undermining support for sanctions and disinvestment policies. There has been a series of systematic attacks on union offices. Over 12 union offices were banned, bombed or seriously vandalised. A dark and sombre picture. This was the year the State officially declared war on the trade union movement; but it was also the year of the largest, longest stayaway in South African history, of highly successful trade union congresses and countless demonstrations of worker resilience. Union membership has been growing by leaps and bounds. Over 2 million workers are now organised. COSATU and NACTU are increasingly forming a united front in their resistance to state and employer attacks. Each and every strike seems to generate new union membership.

In comparison, our efforts - as the international community - look wan and pale. To what extent have we been able to fulfil the commitments undertaken through the adoption of the conclusions of the ILO Conference Committee against Apartheid during our last session in Geneva?

The ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on Southern Africa examined, among other things, the impact of sanctions against South Africa. Let us just take a look at one of the campaigns we identified for target action - the coal embargo. According to 1987 statistics, Japan was by far the largest importer of South African coal, followed by Italy and Spain. Next on the list, with roughly similar quotas, were the Federal Republic of Germany, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Belgium/Luxembourg, followed by Israel and the Netherlands. According to forecasts recently published by Drewry Shipping Consultants in London, coal imports in the Far East are set to rise by 28 per cent, to nearly 79 million tonnes, by 1992. Over the same period, imports in Europe are expected to rise by 57 per cent, to 110 million tonnes.

This, in itself, is a challenge to our tripartite organisation. The ICFTU, for its part, on the recommendation of the Co-ordinating Committee, has just established a special working party to promote a co-ordinated approach towards a coal embargo at the level of the major North Sea coal transport harbours. We have just produced a detailed study on South Africa's coal trade and have published posters, in six languages, calling for an embargo of South African coal. I shall be happy to make them available to members of this Conference.

Our analysis of the impact of sanctions, which was prepared in collaboration with labour experts inside South Africa, confirmed that the ILO Committee on Apartheid was correct in its constant emphasis on the need for strong financial sanctions against South Africa. There is no doubt that the unofficial and market-based disruption of credit to South Africa by international financial institutions has had the most dramatic effect on economic growth and, if this could be translated into meaningful comprehensive and systematic financial sanctions, it could be the most effective lever to advance the process of real change in South Africa. The ICFTU special monitoring unit on sanctions is therefore preparing back-up material for an international trade union campaign for such measures.

A detailed study on South Africa's efforts to obtain energy self-sufficiency has also been finalised by our special monitoring unit, and is now being used by the ICFTU affiliates in a co-ordinated campaign to thwart these efforts.

But to be successful, we must have a tripartite commitment; all constituents of the International Labour Organisation have their role to play and must play it to the full. One priority area for our tripartite action should be an international campaign to ensure that employers do not take advantage of the anti-union clauses of the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

COSATU and NACTU have undertaken to send to the ICFTU names of those companies that have already invoked those clauses. We need a truly concerted campaign to fight this legislation, the content of which contravenes ILO Conventions and is the subject of a complaint addressed to the Director-General.

Let us also not take for granted that the long overdue independence of Namibia is now finally being achieved. Already there is talk of a new form of constructive engagement that could condition the independence process. More than ever before, international pressure must be deployed to the full, if South Africa is to be forced to comply fully with resolution 435.

We, in the ICFTU, welcome the tremendous progress made by the workers in Namibia over the past year in organising themselves into at least five major unions with a membership of over 70,000. The ICFTU stands ready to give the maximum support to efforts to promote the independence of their country, as well as to prepare to play their role in the nation-building process after independence.

The ICFTU very much welcomes His Excellency President Mugabe's assurances that Zimbabwe will continue acting as a ready host for initiatives aimed at giving support to the independent Black trade union movement in South Africa. The co-operation of the Zimbabwe Government in enabling the ICFTU to hold a meeting of its Co-ordinating Committee in Harare is one example of this commitment.

Indeed, the solidarity of the front-line States and SADCC countries with the struggle against apartheid - in spite of South Africa's continued aggression and destabilisation - should serve as an example to us all.

That is why during the meeting of our Co-ordinating Committee we devoted a special session to examining, together with the South African Trade Union Co-operation Council, ways and means of most effectively assisting SATUCC and its affiliates to tackle the problem of migrant labour, promotion of employment and other forms of support to the region, and to countries most seriously affected by South Africa's destabilisation, such as Mozambique. While we were happy to be able to provide some emergency assistance through the national centre of Mozambique (OTM), we are examining ways and means together with the OTM of maximising assistance so as to give tangible support to national efforts aimed at achieving economic independence. Our plans are very relevant to the discussions we have been having during this Seventh Regional Conference on the importance of co-operatives as well as on other questions related to rural development.

Needless to say, and many speakers before me have already stressed this point, one cannot talk of rural development without taking cognisance of the role of women workers in this sector. We have seen that 70 per cent of Africa's female population lives in the rural areas. The ICFTU very much welcomes the emphasis on the question of African women workers at this Conference. The ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on southern Africa had a lengthy discussion on the situation of women workers in the subregion; the ICFTU fully supports the aims and the objectives of the SATUCC Advisory Women's Committee. Following up the resolutions of its 14th World Congress, numerous positive action programmes, as well as programmes aimed at the integration of women in the trade union movement, are currently being undertaken by the ICFTU on the African continent.

I have talked at some length about the economic emancipation of the southern African subregion. Of course, the problem of achieving economic independence is not limited to southern Africa alone. Africa's overall debt crisis has been highlighted in many forums. The ICFTU African Regional Organisation, at its Tenth Regional Conference held in Mbabane, Swaziland in July this year, called on the Executive Board of the ICFTU to elaborate a programme of action aimed at writing off debts and taking other measures for the massive reduction in the burden of external debt, the stabilisation of commodity prices at remunerative levels, increased investment in development and an expansion of Africa's trading opportunities; the reform of structural adjustment policies of the IMF, the World Bank and other agencies so as to ensure the promotion of employment, the alleviation of social hardship and the full involvement of trade unions in strengthened mechanisms for tripartite policy-making and implementation. Accordingly, the ICFTU made direct representations to the IMF and the World Bank. Moreover, in order to give further impetus to this programme of action, we have discussed together with the OATUU and our African affiliates plans to hold a major economic conference on the African continent in the course of next year to build on the work already done in seeking solutions to the debt crisis, the organisation of rural and informal sectors, the problems of privatisation and other related questions that are preoccupying the African trade unions, as well as the international free trade union movement.

The ICFTU fully endorses the conclusions of the ILO High-Level Meeting on Employment and Structural Adjustment and looks forward to serious tripartite efforts to ensure their implementation.

Indeed, more than ever before we need unity of commitment and action at tripartite level. We are confident that the Seventh African Regional Conference held here in Harare will help translate our commitments into practical measures.

Interpretation from French: Mr. GEORGET (Employers' delegate, Niger) - I thank you for providing me with an opportunity to address this meeting prior to my departure for Brussels on Sunday. I would not have liked to leave Harare without addressing this Conference. Allow me to join other speakers who have preceded me to this rostrum in congratulating you on your election to preside over the work of this Seventh African Regional Conference in Harare, the beautiful capital of Zimbabwe. I am convinced that, thanks to your knowledge and experience, the Conference will achieve concrete results in the interests of African countries and nations, within the framework of tripartism. The Report of the Director-General to the Conference, whose clarity and conciseness I would like to acknowledge, deals with two highly topical subjects: recent developments in social and labour matters in South Africa and Namibia, and women's work in Africa. My statement will address one or two aspects of these subjects which have attracted my attention.

As far as social and labour matters in South Africa and Namibia are concerned, everyone has heard of apartheid in South Africa. What is less well known is that the entire political, economic and social development of South Africa is based on the supremacy of one colour of skin over the other.

More eloquent speakers than I have described in sharp detail the inhuman and dehumanising nature of apartheid, which the White minority established years ago and are hanging on to despite the disapproval of the international community at large and the nations of Africa and the Black and Coloured inhabitants of South Africa in particular. Without going into details I feel I must highlight certain aspects of apartheid in South Africa that are so subtle as to escape international condemnation.

For example, although a series of new laws have just replaced the most retrograde legislation, the way they are implemented has dashed the vain hopes that they had given rise to. Apartheid is a hydra-headed monster which has restricted trade union activity by amending the labour legislation, which banned anti-apartheid organisations in 1988, which conducts mass arrests under the state of siege and which holds trade union representatives and other people under arbitrary arrest for months on end. Apartheid means large-scale attacks on the headquarters and offices of COSATU and NACTU and the wounding and killing of women and children. Apartheid means the denial of the right of assembly of Blacks, the close surveillance of trade unions. These measures all reflect the anxiety of the Government in the face of the increasingly overt opposition of the trade unions, their ability to organise on a broader scale, their growing power in the public sector and mining industry and their role as institutions promoting the development of a Black democracy. This list of injustices perpetrated by the apartheid regime of South Africa could be lengthened to include low salaries, the mass unjustified dismissal of Blacks, the exclusion of Blacks from many jobs in the public sector and the restrictions on their promotion in the private sector, the deficiencies of occupational safety and health standards which in the space of a single year have resulted in a series of mining accidents and four major disasters, the forced relocation of Blacks in the name of "orderly urbanisation and homeland consolidation", and the adoption of a deliberately second-rate education and training policy for Black children.

These are just some of the aspects of apartheid that I would like to remind you of, aspects that no healthy mind can possibly accept or justify. African countries were for a long time the only countries to react vigorously against such barbaric and dehumanising practices. The front-line countries, whose geographical ties to South Africa are obvious, have been at the forefront in strenuously denouncing the retrograde and insulting behaviour of South Africa, at the risk of their political, economic and social stability.

Recently, Africa's efforts have been backed, if only imperfectly as yet, by the international community. Economic sanctions have been adopted, sometimes applied, sometimes opposed, with varying success. If the South African problem is to be resolved other than by the force of arms, the international community must urgently adopt co-ordinated measures aimed at the areas where South Africa is most vulnerable.

In Part II of his Report, the Director-General looks at women's work in Africa under five headings: an overview of women's work in Africa, women in the rural sector, women in the urban informal sector, women in the formal sector, and Black women's work under apartheid. It concludes with an outline of the ILO's response to the problem.

Although it would be wrong to over-generalise about women's work in Africa because circumstances differ so widely, the fact remains that generally speaking the lot of working women is altogether unenviable compared with that of working men in the same category and at the same level of skills. Among other points the Report cites their extremely heavy workload due to the fact that women combine income-generating activities and household and child-care activities, their inadequate access to resources such as fertile land, livestock, credit, education and training and technology, not to mention their limited access to effective means of controlling the timing of childbirth, their lower returns on labour and lesser control over production and their more limited access to alternative employment, especially in the industrial sector and the emerging occupations.

The reasons behind all this are discussed at length in the Director-General's Report. Everywhere in Africa laws are being adopted to raise the status of women and decisions are being taken to place them at the front of the political scene

with high-level public and technical responsibilities. Not only are these praiseworthy gestures aimed at a very small minority, but they have failed to improve the lot of women as mothers, housekeepers and wives. After working in the fields, fetching water or coming home from the office, the lot of women at home is the same everywhere, and they continue to assume the same essential chores that have traditionally been theirs. Very few men help with household chores, and very few women find this abnormal.

So, whatever measures are taken to remedy the situation described by the Director-General in his Report, it is a question of changing mentalities and bringing about a concerted approach between men and women. It is true that everywhere, at the national and international levels, new programmes and projects are springing up for the benefit of women; the United Nations system in general and the ILO in particular have been giving these efforts special attention. None the less, it is advisable to involve men and women from the start, so as to avoid a situation where women alone must implement programmes designed by men for women, or by women for women. I do not mean to call into question the specific nature of each sex, but I am convinced that the chances of success of any action in favour of women depend upon an integrated approach involving men and women, because only this approach will enable us to bring about a positive change in mentality.

Although the work of women in Africa is one of the key factors highlighted in the Director-General's Report, few delegations here present have deemed it useful to include or involve women. Even in the secretariat of the ILO, the percentage of women is below 20 per cent, and I can count African women in the ILO secretariat on one hand. The repeated appeal of the Director-General in this regard has not been heeded by African policy-makers, most of whom are men. It is also true that social constraints hardly allow men to follow women elsewhere for career reasons.

To conclude this brief analysis of the situation of women's work in Africa, I would like to refer to what was said here two days ago by Miss Mackie, who is the Employer member of the ILO's Governing Body delegation. She said "Even in acknowledging their right to equality and giving them your support, please make sure you are hearing what women themselves say about their needs. Please listen, even if it means accepting priorities other than your own. Equality, like freedom, means something different to those who seek it and those from whom it is sought."

As a veteran of International Labour Conferences and regional conferences, I wish to make a final comment. For the activities of the ILO, whether in setting standards or in their implementation, to have a real impact on the world of work, we must continually emphasise the tripartism which characterises all our activities. One of the aspects of this tripartism has to do with the participation at all our meetings of independent and qualified representatives of employers and workers. As regards the International Labour Conference, I repeat, the annual International Labour Conference, I would like to enjoin African governments and African workers to support our efforts to lighten the burden of sending tripartite delegations to Geneva by supporting the amendment of the Constitution of the ILO, which will ensure that funds from the ILO budget are allocated to help to repay the travel and hotel costs of these delegations. To seek to avoid this modest contribution would be shortsighted, because if tripartism is relegated to a second plane, the quality of our deliberations and their usefulness for developing countries would suffer enormously.

Such a situation would lead to a lack of credibility and in turn would discourage workers and employers, because their interests are identical to their confidence in the ILO.

It is within the framework of tripartism that I would like to thank you, Mr. President for giving me the floor, and this august Assembly for having listened to me.

(The Conference adjourned at 12.45 p.m.)

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