

DECENT WORK PARTNERSHIPS FOR DECENT WORK

Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department

Interreligious Seminar on Decent Work 27-29 April 2011, Geneva

Executive Summary and Summary of Work

Objectives

The pursuit of lasting peace is a fundamental convergence shared by the ILO and faith-based organizations best expressed through the commitment to the “material well-being and the spiritual development of all in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity” of the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia. This principle informed an interreligious dialogue with partners and affiliates that ILO organized to identify areas where converging ideas could promote human dignity, respect and security. The recent economic crisis, political transitions experienced in select countries and increasing unemployment provides an opportunity to apply a value-based approach in advocating for peace, social justice and care for creation.

The International Labour Organisation organized a workshop on the theme of “Religions & Decent Work” in Geneva on 27-29 April 2011 in partnership with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and in association with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). The seminar is part of a global series of interreligious seminars to be held in countries including Chile, Ethiopia, Senegal and others. The project began with an Interreligious Seminar on Decent Work held in Dakar in 2009.

This workshop gathered leaders of the Christian (Catholics, Protestants, Russian Orthodox), Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist communities to underscore the existing convergences between religious values and tenets of the decent work agenda including the right to work, solidarity and social protection.

Expected Outcomes and Results

The meeting was designed to bring together existing partners, experts from a diversity of religious traditions as well as specialists from the International Labour Organization. There were presentations on the meaning of work in each religious tradition, the value of rights and ethics in work and commitments by faith-based organizations. Interventions, comments and a general debate promoted knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices among partners.

Outcomes of the meeting included:

- 1) a renewed commitment to work with the ILO (WCC, ISESCO, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace) and interest of representatives from the Federation of French Buddhism, Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow and the Orthodox Jewish community.
- 2) a commitment by participants to contribute recommendations for a pedagogical brochure addressing human dignity, employment, social rights with particular emphasis on social protection, child labour and migration.
- 3) a commitment to expand the network of experts, share bibliography and materials and to facilitate correspondence with participants from previous and future seminars through a web-based platform, Globethics.net.
- 4) a commitment to develop local initiatives with their current partners on religion and decent work and include a network of Muslim entrepreneurs, a network of Halal businesses, interreligious dialogue in France with diverse communities and engagement with the Buddhist Federation in France.

Partners

Through a relationship with organizations from different religious traditions, namely, the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP), our partners reflect a diverse and non-exclusive platform. The Seminar builds upon long-lasting partnerships with the ILO.



The World Council of Churches helps churches and religious communities work with and for the vulnerable in today's world and has been a long standing partner with the ILO. In recent years, the book "Philosophical and Spiritual Perspectives on Decent Work" (edited by Dominique Peccoud) is the fruit of a seminar in which it had been actively engaged. In the past, occasions of exchanges and cooperation were numerous. A keynote production was the document published by Louis Christiaens and François Dermange titled *Les Eglises Protestantes et la Question Sociale*.



The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace expresses the commitment of the Catholic Church to stimulate reflexion and progress on social justice in regions and on the international scene. Relationships between the ILO and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace have been continuous since the founding of the Council itself after the Second Vatican Council. The latest Encyclical of Pope Benedict, *Caritas in veritate*, supports the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (Paragraph 63). The mission of the Council includes promotion of this encyclical, both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church.



The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is a welcome newcomer as a partner in this project. The Organization promotes Islamic culture and education as it enjoys a wide network of experts in Islamic scholarship and ethics. It is contributing to this series of seminars in this way.

In addition to our partners, we included representatives from the Buddhist and Yeshiva University communities as well as indigenous organizations in our invitation to join this seminar and network. The shared commitment of our partners and affiliates to social justice through decent work is essential in promoting an inclusive network.

Participants

Participants in the seminar included members from our partner organizations as well as affiliates and experts in interreligious affairs. Participants from the World Council of Churches (Protestant tradition) included Hielke Wolters, Rogate Mshana and Carlos Ham. From the Catholic tradition, Flaminia Giovanelli represented the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace with associates, Françoise Salmon (CERAS, Paris, France) and Hildegard Hagemann from the German Commission for Justice and Peace.



4 representatives from the Muslim community included Abdellilah Benarafa and Mohammed Al-Midani from the ISESCO, Abbas Aroua from the Cordoba Foundation and Yahya Pallavicini from the Comunità Religiosa Islamica and the ISESCO.

From the Russian Orthodox tradition, Michael Gundayev represented the Patriarchate du Moscou. Eric Ackermann represented the Jewish community and

Michel Aguilar represented the l'Union Bouddhiste de France.

The founder and director, Christoph Stückelberger, of Globethics.net, a global network of persons and institutions interested in various fields of applied ethics, led a presentation along with Muriel Junaiden Hausler.

The meeting was opened by Morten Hovda, from the Cabinet of the Director General. In addition, there were 6 ILO Specialists. Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, served as moderator for the seminar, Anita Amorim-South South Specialist from Partnerships & Development Cooperation, Clara van Panhuys from Social Security, Ben Smith from the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour, Susan Puerto from the Youth Employment Network and Deputy Director of Standards, Karen Curtis. Mr Juan Hunt, Acting Director of the Department of Partnerships and Development took part in an informal session.

Sequence of Events

In the opening session, Morten Hovda expressed the ILO's interest in continued work with faith-based organizations. This was followed by remarks by stakeholders: Hielke Wolters WCC, Abdelillah Benarafa (ISESCO) and Flaminia Giovanelli (PCJP) which outlined



the role of interreligious dialogue in the promotion of decent work. A presentation on the role of decent work in the history of the ILO by Pierre Martinot-Lagarde and Anita Amorim contextualized values. The need for interreligious dialogue, the concept of decent work and converging principles framed the subsequent working sessions.

Session I, The meaning of work in each religious tradition

The first working session highlighted the different meanings of work and its significance in each religious tradition. Work can have a positive or negative connotation in shifts from one tradition to another. Carlos Ham from the WCC argued that work should reflect a “calling” or vocation, as humans are called to be stewards of creation. Flaminia Giovanelli from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace emphasized work as a central piece in cultivating human dignity as it provides resources for ‘ruling the earth. It cannot be commodified as it derives from the nature of man to be created in the image of God. She develops this idea through the Catholic tradition of *personalism*, which places the human person and activity at the center of the social question. Work is detailed further as a fundamental aspect of human existence in the encyclical letters of the Catholic Church. From the Islamic tradition, Abbas Aroua noted as well that work cannot be a commodity as it includes all human activity. Furthermore, ethics is at the core of preserving human dignity through work as it is inseparable from religious and spiritual duty according to Abdelillah Benarafa (ISESCO). The Buddhist tradition stressed that the world of work has unfortunately produced immense suffering. With the elimination of structural greed, however, work can alleviate suffering and human dignity.

Session II, An ethics and rights-based approach to work in each religious tradition

This session presented the need for legislation and ethics in the world of work. The violence and risk of an increasingly complex global economic system requires that business leaders, union federations, governments and civil society take action to advance social justice. From Globethics.net, Christoph Stückelberger noted that an implementation of “work ethics” favours legal frameworks that regulate business practices, government structures and institutions. Françoise Salmon noted that the Catholic Church’s advocacy for workers’ rights benefits enterprise as a whole. Mohammed Al-Midani argued that the rule of law in Islam, namely Quranic law (*sharia*) and teachings of the Prophet Muhammed (*sunna*), is the principle means for governing daily life with the goal of achieving a just society for all. In the different schools of Islamic thought, this includes all human activity as work. The ILO presentation of the Social Protection Floor offered a legal example of a social safety net that advances social justice through a provision for essential services. The presentation of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour highlighted further significance of religious organizations as partners at the local and national level. The overall discussion demonstrated that faith-based organizations have a stake in advancing an ethics and right-based approach to these programs.

Session III, Commitments to social justice made by each religious tradition

There are commitments made to social justice in each religious tradition. From the WCC, Rogate Mshana emphasized the commitment of the Protestant tradition to averting structural greed to as the basis for advancing human dignity and decent work. The promotion of decent work in the catechism of the Catholic Church safeguards human dignity in all sectors including the domestic and the informal sectors. In this tradition, Hildegard Hagemann called for an approach to challenges in child labour, poor working conditions and domestic work grounded in solidarity to achieve social justice. She recalled John Paul II's statement in *Redemptoris Missio* that man (and human work) is the principle agent of development to show the Catholic perspective on this issue. Yahya Pallavicini presented the ban on interest (*riba*) and the obligatory ritual of charity (*zakat*) as concrete examples where Islamic practices reflect a commitment to social justice. This interest in Islamic finance "ties every profit to a true form of work and to relations of reciprocal collaboration and trust between men." From the perspective of the ILO, Deputy Director of Standards, Karen Curtis, presented the history of labour standards as the international legal mechanism to ensure adherence to labour regulations and conventions. A presentation by Susana Puerto of the Youth Employment Network, a joint program of the ILO with the United Nations and the World Bank, complemented the interreligious dimension by presenting a program that is committed to achieving social justice through youth employment and entrepreneurship initiatives. The ILO's programmatic approach complemented the commitments expressed by faith-based organizations in the advancement of decent work.

Concluding Session & Remarks for Seminar

The concluding session underscored important themes for the work of the ILO and provided recommendations for further engagement. As Yahya Pallavicini noted, "the aim of creating synergies between ethics, politics, finance, commerce and the universal values are present in the three great monotheistic, Abrahamic religions -Judaism, Christianity and Islam" and other religious traditions. There was consensus from all participants to continue networking, publish a series of pedagogical materials on the relationship between decent work and religion and to assist in the implementation of projects addressing entrepreneurship, employment and immigration.

Follow up and future development

The Geneva seminar, as part of a long range series of seminar, opens the path for future collaboration between ILO, global partners and Faith-based organization. It highlighted some of the most striking convergences between the ILO decent work agenda and its values, and values inherited from religious traditions. It provides therefore solid ground for cooperation at the national, regional and global level. Without anticipating on future decisions and orientations, in this report, we can highlight both immediate outcomes medium and long range plans:

Next activities

A **publication** will be prepared on the convergences between Religions & Decent Work will highlight some of the core ILO values and how they resonate with religious traditions. This will include publications, comments and recommendations from all interreligious seminars.

Globethics.net

An **online work group** has been launched in follow-up for the seminar. It is located on Globethics.net, an online global networking platform, The aforementioned themes and highlights will continue to be shared vis-a-vis the Globethics.net platform and include all participants in seminars such as these. The success of the discussions was a result of the expert contributions by partners and ILO specialists. Participants expressed enthusiasm for future partnership and networking in support of joint efforts with the ILO and respective organizations. Continuity, communication and collaboration among all partners (ISESCO, WCC and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace) on thematic issues were reiterated in gratitude for the seminar.

Future seminars

The following Interreligious Seminar on Decent Work will take place on 11-12 July 2011 in **Santiago**, Chile. In collaboration with the ILO country office in Santiago, Chile, this continued partnership with the ISESCO, WCC and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace will host a meeting of similar thematic content. This meeting will gather a group that is representative of the religious demography in the country. The invited guests will include leaders, intellectuals/university representatives and NGO leaders affiliated with different religious groups.

In the course of October, a similar seminar will be organized in Ethiopia with the view of bringing together the main actors of religious communities and preparing the path for other forms of cooperation at the national levels. In Ethiopia, communities involved will be the Orthodox Church, the Muslim community, the Evangelical and Lutheran Churches and the Catholic Church.

Finally, in December, a second interreligious seminar will be organized in Dakar. Representatives of the most important religious communities of the country, the Muslims, the Catholic Church and traditional groups are expected to attend. As this meeting will be the second one held in the same country, this will be an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and increase collaboration on substantive issues pertaining to the Decent Work Agenda, social dialogue, religious discrimination and social security.

Future developments

Each seminar is an opportunity to increase knowledge sharing, to identify and work with some of the main actors of religious communities in a spirit of trust and mutual understanding. Issues highlighted are often of great importance for the implementation of the Decent Work agenda. Mutual understanding, exchanges and contacts are there to pave the way for future implementation of common projects. In the Geneva seminar, time was devoted to information and exchanges on key ILO development projects

concerning the eradication of the worst forms of child labour, youth unemployment, social security. This should be considered as a first step. In future seminars, time will be devoted to country specific projects and to common discussions on the best way to enhance collaboration.

In this first step, ILO is grateful to the WCC for its hospitality and leadership. Its participation has been essential to the organization of the meeting. The ILO looks forward to increased collaboration in preparation for the meeting and in its follow up. The ILO is also grateful to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the ISESCO for their continuous support.