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Meeting of Parliamentarians held during the
ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization
Lisbon, 31 October - 2 November 2007

The IPU organized the participation of a number of parliamentarians at the ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization. The Forum brought together representatives of governments, employers and employees, as well as smaller numbers of civil society organizations and members of parliament.

In the course of the Forum, the IPU convened a separate meeting of parliamentarians. The meeting was chaired by Senator J. P. Letelier (Chile). The participants discussed how best the IPU could facilitate parliamentary action on decent work for a fair globalization and extend its consequent cooperation with the ILO. The conclusions of the meeting are set out below.

1. Parliaments and their members have key responsibilities in relation to labor, employment and social justice issues. Their participation is essential to achieving decent work for a fair globalization.
2. Parliamentary action is required to ratify international labor instruments and translate them into a national framework. This involves helping to influence and formulate policies aimed at ensuring employment for all in decent working conditions, which in turn requires adapting existing legislative and regulatory frameworks, overseeing government policies, adopting the national budget and scrutinizing the public accounts.
3. Parliaments should strive to ensure coherence between economic and social policies at the national, regional and international levels. In this context, they should assume greater responsibility in international negotiations in order to achieve the goal of consistency and coherence of global economic and social policies. This will also require greater interaction between parliaments and the multilateral institutions.
4. These findings are reflected in greater detail in the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Following up on the recommendations of the report, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) - with the support of parliaments - has taken a number of steps. These include organizing a global parliamentary debate on job creation and employment, adopting a resolution setting out recommendations for parliamentary action and endorsing proposals for the establishment of a joint multi-year programme of cooperation between the ILO and the IPU.

5. The IPU should assist parliaments in moving this agenda forward. It should do so first of all by encouraging parliaments to act on specific issues such as minimum labor standards; decent working conditions and a working environment that is also free of exposure to harmful agents; enhancing employment mobility; migrant workers; “the brain drain”; employment for the young; reform of pension systems; and ending child labor. These issues reflect a vision of more caring societies developing through a fairer globalization.

6. The IPU should also assist parliaments by facilitating their interaction with each other and in particular of their members who are actively working in parliament on the multiple aspects of decent work and fair globalization by helping them to share experiences and best practices. The IPU should also promote parliamentary interaction with the multilateral institutions and inform them of the content of the decent work agenda.

7. The IPU should develop specific tools to facilitate parliamentary action on these issues. Such tools should be developed in cooperation with the ILO, based on the model of the parliamentary handbooks developed in recent years by the IPU. Inspiration for content should be drawn from the toolkit on employment and decent work recently issued by the ILO. The IPU should also facilitate direct contact between interested members of parliament through the use of the IPU website.

8. In order to drive this process forward, the IPU should establish a parliamentary advisory group on employment and decent work. The group should be composed of some 15 members of parliament from the different geopolitical regions who work on labor, employment and social development issues in their respective parliaments. The ILO should be represented in this group. The group should report to the IPU Governing Council on an annual basis.

9. The advisory group should develop and monitor the implementation of proposals for specific IPU activities. These would include facilitating networking between those who work on employment and social development issues, preparing working tools for them and others in parliament, running parliamentary campaigns on specific issues, and organizing regional and global meetings. The advisory group should be tasked with undertaking the study that was recommended by the 116th IPU Assembly on how parliaments address the impact of globalization in their respective countries, including an assessment of the role of parliaments in promoting decent work for all.

Lisbon, 2 November 2007