She highlighted the contribution of funding from the North to the success and development of SERVOL’s programmes, noting the particular contributions of Helvetas. She stressed self-reliance, empowerment and human development in achieving full economic and social participation and sustainable development. She also emphasized the distinction between economic and developmental growth, listening to the poor, and adopting the North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development.

The floor was then opened for discussion. Participants highlighted the Western style of education in developing countries left over from colonial times, as well as the need to shift from reliance on throw-away economies to recycling economies.

Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, said universal social standards are not possible due to the historical, cultural and social diversity of countries. He stated that demands to include social issues in international trade discussions mask protectionist tendencies in industrialized countries, as they are based on the precept that fair and free competition requires a level playing field. He said it would be impossible for poor countries to meet the cost of internationally acceptable social standards because standards ultimately depend on the wealth of each country. This has been generally accepted; now it is proposed that all countries implement core labor standards, most of which are already included in ILO Conventions and to which many countries are already signatories.

He stated that rich countries preach democracy to poor nations and apply sanctions against those determined to be undemocratic, but they do not advance democracy at the international level.

Universal social standards are not possible nor just unless they are linked to and conditional on parallel implementation of national and international anti-poverty programmes, and are incompatible with unfettered competition in the global market. He explained the hostility of Southern countries toward proposals to bring trade-related social standards into the arena of the WTO rather than the ILO, which they view as more democratic, and their opposition to further international intervention beyond the existence of the ILO. He underscored that the solidarity of those in the North who believe in justice and equality, have access to the media and can influence their governments and transnational corporations is essential if the struggle against poverty is to succeed.

Nancy Barry, Women’s World Banking, said the South will be competing for jobs in the North unless the North embraces the realities of globalization and builds a world where everyone benefits.

She said we must stop thinking in terms of polarities such as North and South or poor and rich if we are to find solutions, and stressed the importance of moving beyond traditional hierarchical systems. She recommended that business-like approaches be used to achieve economic and social change. She expressed concern over the lack of participation of finance and industry representatives at the conference and said it is the role of civil society to find ways to connect such powerful people with the poor. Noting that many solutions, such as micro-finance, are from the South, she called for...
replacing consultants to developing countries with lateral learning. She cited several cases of women leaders changing the world through entrepreneurial work.

In an ensuing discussion, participants posed questions regarding: the weakness of trade unions in developing countries; the burden of debt repayment in developing countries; the need for reparations to Africa in light of the wealth accumulated from slavery and colonialism; whether Southern non-aligned countries could agree on a social standard among themselves; and problems of focusing on repayment as the main criteria for success of microcredit loans and their fostering of Western consumer markets in rural areas.

WORKSHOPS

Does Job Competition Exist? Asian and Swiss Perspectives: One panelist contested the view that the South is stealing jobs from the North and suggested that rising unemployment in the North is caused by unregulated technological change and a shift in priorities from full employment to low inflation. Participants debated the need for and implications of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and core labor standards and agreed that foreign investment is desirable but disagreed as to the extent and by whom it should be regulated.

The Human Right to Food Security Creates Jobs: Participants concluded that the right to food means access to productive resources such as land, credit and self-employment, and that governments are obligated to respect, protect and fulfill access to such resources. Participants emphasized the need to: monitor inconsistencies between intergovernmental organizations’ policies and the human right to food; establish means to protect developing countries’ agrarian sectors within the WTO; maintain farmers’ rights to seeds; and accord higher priority to rural development.

Fair Trade Labelling and Private Sector Social Clauses: Discussion focused on codes of conduct, their implementation to improve labor conditions and the need to incorporate Southern NGO perspectives in their formulation. Codes of conduct were regarded as process-oriented tools involving workers, companies and civil society, and as complements to efforts toward global minimum standards in the production of goods.

NGOs, the "Drive Belts" Linking Researchers and End-users: Participants discussed the need to: tackle gaps in institutional cultures and approaches between NGOs and researchers based on successful examples; ensure that applied research is driven by local needs and strategically planned at national and international levels; build capacity at all levels; increase the participation of women and social scientists in research; assign higher international levels; build capacity at all levels; increase the participation of women and social scientists in research; assign higher international levels; build capacity at all levels; increase the participation of women and social scientists in research; assign higher international levels; build capacity at all levels; increase the participation of women and social scientists in research; assign higher international levels; build capacity at all levels; increase the participation of women and social scientists in research; assign higher international levels.

Another said globalization is a reality but noted that development and capitalism have not solved, but in fact have worsened social problems, particularly with respect to social dumping. Another disagreed, believing that wealth is well distributed, particularly in newly industrialized Asian countries. He suggested that companies be encouraged to sign and implement social charters.

When discussion was opened for comments from the floor, one participant asked panelists to characterize the future world economic order. Panelists’ descriptions included: markets for capital, goods and services with sanctions for human rights violations, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but not at the WTO level. Another said the advantages Switzerland enjoys, such as trust, cannot be given away and that other countries must earn such advantages. Other suggestions included the creation of additional jobs and fixing standards in international agreements.