



# The ECOSOC Bulletin

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**A summary report of the Informal Preparatory Meeting on the Theme of the 2006 High Level Segment**  
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## **SUMMARY OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE ECOSOC 2006 HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT: 4-5 APRIL 2006**

The preparatory meeting for the 2006 High-level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) took place on 4-5 April, at UN headquarters in New York. The meeting focused on the theme for the High-level Segment, "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development." Roundtable discussions were held on growth and employment, an integrated agenda to achieve full employment and decent work, increasing employment opportunities and productivity of low income groups in rural and urban areas, promoting productive employment and decent work for women and young people, working out of crisis, and the challenge of globalization. Participants also heard key note addresses on the role of enterprise development in promoting decent work, social protection for the working poor, and human rights in the workplace.

The background notes prepared for all roundtables are available online at: [http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/hls2006/Issues\\_notes.pdf](http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/hls2006/Issues_notes.pdf)

The outcomes of the preparatory meeting will feed into ECOSOC's High-level Segment, which will take place as part of the substantive ECOSOC session from 3-28 July, in Geneva.

## **REPORT OF THE ECOSOC PREPARATORY MEETING**

Opening the ECOSOC preparatory meeting on Tuesday, 4 April, ECOSOC President Ali Hachani (Tunisia) noted that the choice of theme for the High-level Segment of ECOSOC, on generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, demonstrates the international community's commitment to actions in this area. He highlighted the importance of promoting full employment and decent work by way of increasing productivity and economic growth, as well as improving preparedness through training and education. While underlining that the issue at hand is not just a developing country problem, Hachani called for solutions beyond conventional wisdom, bringing all dimensions together, and incorporating the full employment and decent work into national development strategies. He urged the roundtables to focus on practical and workable solutions to feed into the ECOSOC High-level Segment and contribute to its successful outcome.

To tackle the issue of full and productive employment and decent work, José Antonio Ocampo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, outlined as key

areas: designing domestic policies and creating a conducive environment at the national level; ensuring that work opportunities available contribute to poverty eradication; and making certain that the international economic environment, especially regarding trade, finance, investment and technology, supports the goal of full employment and decent work for all. He said that, according to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Global Employment Trend Brief, nearly 192 million people were unemployed worldwide in 2005, noting that global economic growth has not led to a similar increase in job creation, and that globalization has widened income disparities between skilled and unskilled workers. Ocampo recognized that the challenge of creating conditions for full and productive employment and decent work rests primarily with national governments, and advocated more effective mainstreaming of employment policies into national development and growth strategies.

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**ROUNDTABLE 1: GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT:  
CREATING A NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO  
FULL EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK**

This roundtable was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Hjalmar W. Hannesson (Iceland) and moderated by José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Director, Employment Sector, ILO.

**Panel presentations:** Chair Hannesson underlined the key questions for discussion, including, *inter alia*: how to ensure a stable macroeconomic framework that spurs employment and economic growth; how to reconcile the need for productivity, growth and competitiveness, with sustained employment growth; and how to promote entrepreneurship that results in decent work.

Salazar-Xirinachs noted the close link between poverty eradication and employment creation and the need to effectively operationalize the decent work agenda. He pointed out that decent work is a normative concept which involves creation of more employment, social protection and social dialogue, and expressed concern about the current decent work deficit.

Helmut Schwarzer, Ministry of Social Affairs, Brazil, highlighted the challenge of reconciling the objectives of economic growth with social protection. He said stabilization policies should seek to reduce vulnerability, and macroeconomic policies should go hand in hand with the microeconomic agenda, on the basis of ILO's decent work policy. Schwarzer emphasized that the international community can encourage social reform by fine-tuning the administration of existing social policy regimes.

Hernán Sandoval, World Health Organization (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health, outlined the work of the Commission that includes gathering best practices for policy makers to develop fair policies that reduce inequalities, stressing that social determinants such as employment conditions, early life development and social exclusion affect health. Observing the huge disparities in health worldwide, he highlighted the need to take a new approach, as sufficient results have not been achieved in relation to present expenditure.

Milivoje Panic, University of Cambridge, recognized that economic growth and employment are means to achieve important social ends, not ends in themselves. Noting the importance of pragmatic approaches, he suggested considering best practices from other countries. To achieve full employment, Panic underscored that macroeconomic policies should not focus solely on maintaining a low inflation rate. He said globalization is making economic prosperity and socio-political stability a shared responsibility, as well as a great challenge, for the international community.

Mentioning that employment creation requires strong and sustainable economic growth, Robert Holzmann, World Bank, favored a multi-sector approach, including: sound macroeconomic policy; good investment climate; appropriate labor market institutions; good education and market-relevant skills; and social safety nets.

To tackle poverty reduction, Peter Fallon, International Monetary Fund (IMF), emphasized the need to improve labor market outcomes, and outlined elements laying the basis for sustained economic growth, including: maintaining a stable macroeconomic environment; strengthening the private sector by means of simplifying the regulatory system and securing property rights; accelerating human capital formation through better provision of health and education services; and improving good governance in developing countries. Fallon also recommended an increase in aid volumes and better aligning aid with country needs.

Peter Bakvis, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), suggested including employment policies in national development strategies and encouraged a discussion on the trade-offs between inflation and full employment. He outlined the conditions for a well-functioning labor market, calling for an appropriate level of regulations.

Irfan ul Haque, Consultant to South Centre, commenting on previous presentations, stressed the need to change the mindset guiding macroeconomic policy and pay more attention to employment. He noted that ineffective demand and lack of capital and skills are detrimental to full employment, and maintained that the relationship between inflation and employment is very tenuous. Ul Haque also questioned Panic's assertion that flexible labor markets lead to lower unemployment levels.

**Discussion:** The Republic of Korea advocated an environment conducive to employment generation that will contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and shared Ocampo's view that globalization is creating labor market imbalances. He proposed formulating comprehensive, as well as tailor-made policies, underscoring that the Washington Consensus is not a panacea.

Nigeria emphasized the need to include ethical values when addressing decent work and asked for more information on the relationship between inflation and employment.

Italy questioned why decent work elements are not being included in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Holzmann highlighted that PRSPs are country-driven and noted that the decent work agenda may not be a priority to countries suffering from other life-threatening constraints. Bakvis, on the other hand, underlined that PRSPs are presented to the World Bank and the IMF, which may not have manifest agendas on decent work and proposed compiling examples of links between poverty reduction and workers' rights.

Mauritania asked whether the size of the informal sector in developing countries affects the development of employment. Fallon replied that the informal sector may play a large role in job creation. However, he noted, it generally plays a much smaller role in economic growth as jobs in the informal sector tend to have low productivity rates.

In response to a question by Brazil on why education and health costs are considered expenditures and not investments, Sandoval and the European Commission said that public health expenditures that save lives should be regarded as investments, although many national accounting systems do not allow such distinction.

Guinea inquired about specific recommendations to foster growth and development, while consolidating peace and recreating employment, in post-conflict situations. Schwarzer highlighted that there are no ready-made receipts for employment generation, but rather an accumulation of best practices and experiences on the benefits, limits and constraints of policy instruments. He said solutions have to be constructed according to national needs, and proposed compiling countries' experiences on implementing decent work strategies.

Cuba said orthodox formulas do not work and may be contradictory as they propose to reduce government spending as a whole while increasing public spending in health and education. Ul Haque reflected that it is crucial to allow countries to experiment with different approaches according to their own conditions, with Panic noting that economic policies have to be judged by their results on social indicators, and thus policies that

increase poverty levels should not be recommended to others. He underlined that different countries achieve development through different approaches and there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Salazar-Xirinachs presented a graph with basic concepts, key policy areas, objectives and outcomes to effectively apply employment strategies. Chair Hannesson adjourned the meeting.

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE ROLE OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN PROMOTING DECENT WORK**

Jacqueline Coke-Lloyd, Executive Director, Jamaica Employers Federation, noted that the absence of financing, inflexible labor market policies, absence of a business culture, and lack of access to appropriate technology serve as obstacles to the establishment of new enterprises in developing countries, and underlined the importance of understanding how to identify and take advantage of business opportunities. On promoting decent work, she favored investing in local skills by creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurs and small enterprises, and she called for a debate on the suitability of a universal standard of decent work.

### **ROUNDTABLE 2: AN INTEGRATED GLOBAL AGENDA TO ACHIEVE FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK**

This roundtable was chaired by ECOSOC President Hachani, and moderated by Sergio M. Miranda-da-Cruz, Director, United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

**Panel presentations:** Chair Hachani introduced the panel highlighting that globalization must benefit everyone while promoting transparency, democracy and accountability. He proposed examining the ways to correct asymmetries that marginalize developing countries, and how globalization can contribute in the fight against poverty.

Miranda-da-Cruz noted the need for an integrated and coherent agenda for international trade, finance, global macroeconomic policies and employment.

Heiner Flassbeck, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), considered the meaning of “sound macroeconomic policy” and of “flexible labor markets”, noting different conceptual approaches to these issues. He pointed out that measures to gain competitiveness and those affecting labor market structures have international repercussions, arguing that countries should allow real wages to rise with productivity.

Kamal Malhotra, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said the outcomes of the 2005 UN World Summit reflect the intent to deal with aid, debt and trade in an integral manner. He observed the lack of progress on development issues within the WTO Doha Round, and highlighted that an aid package cannot substitute making progress in Doha’s development agenda. He also said more needs to be done to reduce debt relief transaction costs, and urged donors to fulfill their aid commitments.

Nilufer Cagatay, University of Utah, focused on the gender perspective of full employment and decent work, stressing that inequalities in the distribution of income and assets may dampen effective demand and growth rates. To promote decent work, she proposed policy interventions at the international level, including: creating a global social trust; promoting employment creation with gender awareness; civil regulations to enforce global codes of conduct; and implementation of pro-poor fiscal policies.

To accomplish greater equity and make progress on the achievement of decent work, Jo Mary Griesgraber, New Rules for Global Finance Coalition, recommended: reforming the governance structure of international financial bodies, such as the IMF and the World Bank; creating a mechanism for dealing with the bankruptcy of sovereign debtors; increased transparency and inclusiveness regarding taxes; and better research on the impact of macroeconomic policies on different sectors of the labor market, especially on the poor.

Ronnie Goldberg, United States Council for International Business, commented on the earlier interventions, calling for greater involvement of business in the discussions leading up to the ECOSOC High-level Segment, underlining the importance of business creation, and also suggested that the Monterrey Consensus inform ECOSOC’s work. She noted that national policies, action and implementation were crucial.

She said that the wage gap is not the only factor driving Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with Flassbeck replying that wages are the largest factor determining the relation between employment and growth and highlighting that measures at the national level have international repercussions.

On the Doha Round, Goldberg said it was a mistake to under-emphasize the role of trade facilitation, while Malhotra responded saying that aid is needed to ensure that international trade rules work for least developed countries.

On the gender dimension of employment, Goldberg questioned whether it was possible to formulate practical policies when the problem varies among different countries, with Cagatay noting the benefits of analyzing fiscal and macroeconomic policies from a gender perspective, to ensure that they benefit the poor.

**Discussion:** Nigeria noted that most FDI in Africa is directed to extractive industries and questioned how to target it towards other sectors. Flassbeck replied that FDI tends to follow higher revenues and good investment climates, noting also that pro-growth policies and stable macroeconomic conditions in countries like China have attracted FDI. Malhotra added that countries can promote these conditions by means of skilled labor and strong infrastructure. Goldberg noted the importance of removing obstacles to “doing business” and said that according to the World Bank’s “Doing Business Report,” opening a business in developing countries requires more effort and entails larger costs than in developed countries.

Italy inquired on how to ensure actual improvements on the ground. Flassbeck commented that studies done in the past year have allowed a more efficient use of investment flows, with Malhotra stressing the responsibility of donors in building coherence amongst mechanisms, using multilateral systems rather than bilateral ones, and considering countries’ capacity to absorb financial flows. Griesgraber highlighted the importance of analyzing the effects of trade policies on developing countries.

The Netherlands asked how international institutions, and ECOSOC in particular, can promote respect for decent work standards. Griesgraber highlighted that ECOSOC can foster coherence of values amongst different organizations. The UK cautioned that international organizations should not exceed their mandate.

Miranda-da-Cruz highlighted the importance of enabling environments to foster innovative investments that promote employment.



Chair Hachani adjourned the meeting stating the firm intention of ECOSOC to maintain permanent contact with all institutions involved in these issues.

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR THE WORKING POOR**

Arjun Sengupta, Chairman of the Centre for Development and Human Rights, New Delhi, stressed that the international community already has committed to the removal of poverty, and called for promptly addressing the chronic deprivation problem of the poor. He maintained that poverty would not exist if the economic, social and cultural rights of the poor were fulfilled, noting that delivering the basic rights of the extremely poor should be prioritized. He also suggested the establishment of a financing facility based on burden-sharing according to per capita income, to assist social protection programmes in developing countries.

### **ROUNDTABLE 3: INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND PRODUCTIVITY OF LOW INCOME GROUPS IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

This roundtable was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Léo Mèrorés (Haiti) and moderated by Azita Berar-Awad, Director, Policy Integration Department, ILO.

**Panel presentations:** While poverty rates have been cut considerably during the last decades, Chair Mèrorés noted that it has not resulted in improved opportunities for low income groups, which still suffer from spiraling poverty. He encouraged the participants to focus on how to maximize the employment potential of the informal economy in rural and urban areas, and debate how to best integrate such policies in the national PRSPs.

Berar-Awad underlined that the working poor have insufficient income to move out of poverty. Noting that four out of five jobs were created in the informal economy in the past years, she emphasized that the informal economy is no longer a marginal phenomenon but the mainstream of development and labor force in developing countries. She mentioned groups belonging to the informal sector including, *inter alia*, microentrepreneurs, home-based workers and migrant workers. She maintained that access to decent work and ensuing entitlements is dependent on policy reform.

David Kaimowitz, Center for International Forestry Research, recognized the numerous opportunities relating to forest-based activities, noting that the issue at stake is to address how such activities can generate more and better jobs. As possible measures, he recommended: promoting forest tenure reform; redirecting government subsidies; encouraging micro-enterprise projects to support forest-based activities; cooperating closely with grass-root forestry organizations; and fully reflecting these measures in national PRSPs.

Leiria Vay García, Association of Farmers Development Committees, stated that economic growth in Latin America has not resulted in more stable and decent work. While investments are directed towards urban populations, she said rural communities are marginalized. She underlined that States have to redistribute resources to promote employment and that the absence of property rights hinders the achievement of decent work.

Gemma Adaba, ICFTU, said the decent work agenda has not been properly reflected in national PRSPs and stressed that the key to promoting decent work is to prioritize employment-intensive approaches. To overcome constraints to poverty reduction and employment creation, she recommended integrating

employment policies into existing development frameworks and incorporating decent work into the MDGs. She also highlighted that small and medium-sized enterprises have a large role in employment creation.

Martha Chen, Harvard University, spoke on the urban informal economy. She outlined recent trends increasing urbanization and informalization, noting that the urban informal workforce raises concerns regarding uncertain legal status, shortage of assets and skills, and lack of market access. She also underlined the need to deal with frameworks for legalizing private property and the provision of infrastructure and services.

On small and medium-sized enterprises, Coke-Lloyd stressed the importance of: fostering entrepreneurial skills and supporting innovations; empowering the underemployed; reviewing the education system; addressing market constraints and opportunities; and seeking to formalize the informal economy.

**Discussion:** The International Association of Economic and Social Councils mentioned the risk of exclusion from the workforce, stressing the importance of ongoing education and training.

Nigeria, with Benin, requested a definition of the informal economy, with Cheng responding that ILO plays a leading role in defining the informal economy, and that the recently expanded definition includes informal enterprises and its workers, and informal work holders. She stressed that many people operate illegally due to the absence of a legal framework or as a result of necessity or tradition. Berar-Awad also emphasized that many people in the informal economy lack legal recognition.

Responding to Belgium's question on the possible creation of a ninth MDG on decent work, Adaba recommended integrating targets from the decent work agenda into existing MDGs.

Sudan suggested focusing on decent rural work, and, with China, noted employment problems derived from urbanization. Cheng highlighted the concept of reverse migration to rural areas and mentioned the scope for developing new smaller towns and clustering industries. China underlined her country's efforts to improve the livelihood of its low-income workers.

The Democratic Republic of Congo expressed concerns over forest conservation in countries facing armed conflict, and Kaimowitz replied that peace is a fundamental condition for providing good livelihoods.

Berar-Awad concluded the discussion, recognizing areas that need to be further addressed, including low-income producers' access to social protection, and the scaling-up of PRSPs. She stressed the importance of such strategies as they bring a participatory and consultative approach and result in level-playing-field measures. To create an enabling environment for the formalization of the informal economy, she recommended a coherent set of policies at all levels, legal recognition and access to land and property. Chair Mèrorés adjourned the meeting.

### **ROUNDTABLE 4: WORKING OUT OF CRISES**

This roundtable was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Dalius Cėkuolis (Lithuania) and moderated by Ambassador Augustine Mahiga (Tanzania).

**Panel presentations:** Chair Cėkuolis highlighted ECOSOC's focus on the transition from humanitarian relief to development, and its engagement in long term development strategies for post-conflict countries. Mahiga highlighted the importance of: incorporating employment in recovery processes to recreate livelihoods; cooperation and coherence in aid agencies' approaches; addressing labor markets from the supply and

demand sides; rehabilitating local trade networks and the private sector; inclusiveness; and ensuring reasonable speed for resource mobilization.

Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative for West Africa, highlighted youth unemployment and its links with the perpetuation of conflict, noting that armies tend to recruit jobless youth and supporting a proposal to create a youth employment unit for West Africa.

Eric Schwartz, Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami, identified lessons learnt including: the importance of an enabling environment for economic recovery; the idea of “building-back better,” a recovery that fosters inclusiveness and accountability; the need for donor support to build local capacities; the need to improve government’s capacity to support economic revitalization; the need for flexibility in the provision of funding to allow broad and sustainable recovery responses; and the importance of international coordination in the response efforts.

John Ohiorhenuan, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, noted the importance of employment generation within post crisis recovery efforts to reduce conflict potential and create new development trajectories. He mentioned the difficulty of generating employment when assets are destroyed and people are displaced and highlighted the need to incorporate employment in recovery planning from the start, targeting both ex-combatants and civil society, and to rebuild skills and reduce aid dependency. He also emphasized the need to recognize the informal economy’s role in providing employment in post conflict situations.

Miguel Bermeo, Sri Lanka Resident Coordinator, identified lessons learnt in Sri Lanka’s peace process, highlighting: the importance of integrated responses and synergies among agencies; the need to use and support local capacities; and the constraints faced by the absence of key infrastructure like roads and ports.

Christopher Lamb, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, commented on the previous interventions noting the importance of: the relationship between relief and development; incorporating livelihood rebuilding in relief efforts; the role of the private sector as provider of employment and source of resilience; and of providing integrated responses to disasters.

**Discussion:** Nigeria noted the importance of addressing pre-conflict situations and of ensuring that employment generation is inclusive. Lamb added the need to provide livelihood alternatives to populations affected by violent conflicts. Guinea Bissau highlighted that post conflict countries in West Africa face the consequences of the collapse of State and social networks, including the creation of marginalized social groups and youth unemployment, which makes people vulnerable to being recruited and engaged in armed conflict. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees emphasized the importance of targeting displaced persons in recovery efforts and addressing equity amongst different groups. The UK supported Ould-Abdallah’s recommendation to create of a youth employment unit for West Africa. The Office of the Special Advisor for Africa said an expert group meeting will be convened to create a publication on youth unemployment in Africa.

Syria noted the need to consider employment and poverty issues in occupied territories.

Germany supported examining the role of the private sector in pre-conflict and post conflict recovery and Sudan urged addressing the root causes of poverty within the decent work debate.

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE**

Sharan Burrow, President of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, cautioned that current global labor trends are going against decent work policy objectives. She called for a global partnership between developed and developing countries to end unemployment, underemployment, poverty and inequality. Noting challenges posed by underemployment coexisting with labor shortages, and by the relocation of companies to countries with low wages, Burrow underscored the importance of freedom of association and minimum wages. She also highlighted that the International Finance Corporation has decided to include core labor standards in loan conditionality, and said the IMF should revisit its recommendations on labor reform.

## **ROUNDTABLE 5: PROMOTING FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

This roundtable was chaired by Ambassador Johan Verbeke (Belgium) and moderated by Marie Simonen, Deputy Executive Director, UN Population Fund.

**Panel presentations:** Chair Verbeke noted problems faced by women and young people in accessing the labor market. Simonen said that the 2005 UN World Summit made the goals of full and productive employment a central objective of PRSPs and stressed that socio cultural attitudes underlie persistent gaps between men and women in the labor market, underscoring the need to empower women.

Martha Chen, Harvard University, identified trends towards feminization and informalization of the labor force, and noted their links to poverty. She said most women face underemployment (not enough work or income) or overwork (long working hours without overtime compensation), and called for policies that are gender aware and gender balanced, as well as targeted interventions to provide support for women in the informal workforce.

Antonious Budi Tjahjono, Youth Employment Network, underscored the importance of work for young people’s dignity and independence, and highlighted participation by youth employment networks in policy making in developing countries.

Robert Holzmann, World Bank, said access to work opportunities is crucial and highlighted the need to improve education systems to provide young people with basic skills needed for entering the workforce. He also mentioned the need to provide child care and flexible hours to prevent women’s unemployment or underemployment.

Barbara Byers, Executive Vice-President, Canadian Labour Congress, commented on the presentations, highlighting the importance of decent work for poverty eradication and to combat the feminization of poverty. She noted the importance of promoting full time jobs with work-life balance and targeted approaches for women and youth.

**Discussion:** Belgium said that the involvement of labor unions in the preparation of PRSPs was a step in the right direction. Italy asked whether there were successful examples of youth participation in policy making and Germany called for best practice examples. Budi Tjahjono outlined participation by youth in policy making, provided examples of success, and said increased youth participation may prevent youth unrest. Chen proposed compiling best practice cases.

The International Association of Economic and Social Councils noted female workers are the first to become unemployed in crises and highlighted the recent problems faced by French young people regarding labor reform. Holzmann reflected on the existence of a two tiered society where the older generation is well protected and the younger generation is employed in precarious conditions, with Chen indicating that nowadays the relative power of labor vs. capital is so low that we risk losing "hard won" labor rights.

Following a question, Byers noted the tendency for older women to live in poverty, with Holzmann emphasizing the need to reassess retirement age and pension systems in many countries.

Simonen closed the panel, highlighting the values of dignity, voice and participation.

#### **ROUNDTABLE 6: THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBALIZATION – LABOR MIGRATION**

This roundtable was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Prasad Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka) and moderated by Ibrahim Awad, Director of ILO's International Migration Programme.

**Panel presentations:** Chair Kariyawasam said that globalization has critical implications for labor migration, stressing the importance to create a win-win situation for all concerned. While labor migration serves as an engine for growth in receiving countries and generates remittance flows to countries of origin, he highlighted that loss of human capital is a cause for concern in developing countries. He also noted the need to establish a multilateral cooperative framework for labor migration, taking into account the linkages of labor migration with development.

Awad noted that globalization has facilitated the interaction of markets, but failed to create jobs. He outlined: the linkage between labor migration and development; the need to reduce irregular migration; the absence of social protection of migrant workers; and the role of the international community in maximizing the benefits of labor migration. He also highlighted the importance of multilateral regional cooperation and the contribution of the UN system in capacity-building.

On maximizing the win-win potential for temporary labor migration, Dirk Bruinsma, UNCTAD, underscored the value of the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) commitments, noting that these can help realizing benefits in both sending and receiving countries. While many receiving countries fear pressure on the domestic labor market, he maintained that opening borders for temporary labor migration may render great benefits.

Marcello Balbo, University of Venice, said the North-South dimension was no longer a predominant feature of international migration, but rather emphasized the country dimension and the effect of labor migration on the urban economy. He noted the more temporary the migration, the more challenges in terms of urban social inclusion, and said migrant workers should not just be seen as important economic engines, but as social actors with general rights.

Sharan Burrow, ICFTU, outlined ILO guidelines on a rights-based approach to labor migration, noting that the main opponents were the beneficiaries of migration, and questioned why the most progressive countries fear international migration. She also highlighted the reluctance to recognize the rights of irregular

migrant workers and outlined the threats to temporary migrant workers. On remittances, she underlined that high charges on money transfers deny developing countries a chance to maximize the benefits of labor migration.

Atif Kubursi, McMaster University, said that labor movements are mired in a web of regulations, limiting their bargaining position. In his view migration is a result of disequilibrium in the labor market, and stressed that trade liberalization would end the need to migrate. Without denying the importance of remittances to developing countries, he also highlighted the loss of human capital caused by labor migration.

Irena Omelaniuk, Migration Adviser, World Bank, commented on the previous interventions, noting that the GATS arrangement can assist in attaining the benefits of migration. She indicated the need to influence governments' capacity to steer labor migration and match demand and supply. Noting that trafficking of migrant workers make countries reluctant to receive them, she said that multilateral frameworks are key to their protection.

**Discussion:** The UK reiterated its commitments to managing international migration, noting the merits of the non-binding ILO guidelines on labor migration.

Canada expressed concern about the language used when addressing international labor migration, and suggested framing the approach differently to achieve new results.

Indonesia underscored that migration contributes to capacity loss and brain drain in developing countries.

On fighting trafficking, Belarus outlined the establishment of a new Inter Agency taskforce to unite the efforts of all parties, lay the foundation for a UN strategy, and assist member states in implementing appropriate measures.

The International Organization for Migration said that a meaningful discussion on full employment and decent work needs to incorporate international migration, noting that increased globalization of labor markets makes developing human capital at the local level a critical issue. He also called for new partnerships focusing on the rights of workers and ensuring the portability of pension schemes.

Awad briefly summed up the roundtable discussion and Chair Kariyawasam adjourned the meeting.

#### **CLOSURE OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING**

In his closing remarks, ECOSOC President Hachani thanked participants for their presentations and fruitful discussions, which will be forwarded to the ECOSOC High-level Segment to be held in Geneva on 3-28 July 2006. He highlighted the value of productivity and enabling climates for investment and enterprise in economic growth. He also underscored the importance of: targeting policies to young people, women and migrant workers; improving working conditions in the informal and agricultural sectors; incorporating employment components in post-conflict relief strategies, and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; and promoting coherence at the policy level, including on trade, employment and technology policies. Finally, Hachani said ECOSOC welcomes the input from international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, and he gaveled the meeting to a close on Wednesday, 5 April at 6:14 pm.